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**Case Study of Middle and Senior Leader Working Relationships in a Secondary
School in England**

Doctoral Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Education (EdD)

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YOUR ACCEPTANCE

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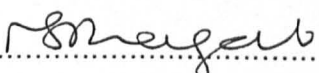
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Glossary

LEA – Local Education Authority.

NFER – National Foundation for Educational Research.

NCSL – formerly known as National College for School Leadership currently known as National College for Teaching and Leadership.

School Improvement Plan (SIP) – rolling programme of what the school intends to do over a period of time.

Senior Leadership Team (SLT) – group of senior leaders within a school with titles such as headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, school manager/bursar who form the strategic leadership team.

Abstract

This study aims to examine whether middle leaders in School A operate beyond their departments to participate in whole school decision-making alongside senior leaders through exploring working relationships. Much has been written about sharing leadership across all levels in schools (Arrowsmith, 2007; Bell *et al*, 2011; Harris, 2011; Bush, 2012) but there remains a gap in empirical research which focuses on middle and senior leader perceptions of being involved in whole school decision-making.

This study is a small ‘real-time’ snapshot to illuminate participant perceptions. The extent of which ‘talk’ of sharing whole school decision-making occurred in practice in School A was explored from a middle and senior leader perspective.

A grounded theory case study approach was used and a small sample of four middle leaders, three senior leaders, and a headteacher were interviewed from School A in the North of England. The interview data was triangulated through observations, documentary analysis of documents, such as agendas and minutes of meetings, before being analysed and compared against existing academic literature. Two important overarching theoretical concepts of ‘*relationships between middle and senior leaders*’ and ‘*organisational culture*’ emerged which underpinned the sub-concepts of ‘*balkanization*’, ‘*collaboration*’, ‘*capacity building*’, ‘*job role*’, and ‘*hierarchy*’.

The findings show a culture of transactional leadership is operating in School A and an ethos of balkanization indicates middle leaders are working in individual departments. There is a belief amongst the middle leaders that their involvement in whole school decision-making is contrived, however, the data also indicates that middle leaders may not readily accept whole school decision-making as part of their wider role.

Research outcomes, which emerged from the data, suggest possible ways forward for School A to increase and embed collaborative decision-making between middle and senior leaders within the existing transactional school culture.

Chapter 1: - Introduction

This chapter will introduce the aims of the study, explain the school, local and national context, and state the research questions.

Why this study?

I am employed in School A as a curriculum leader and, following my Masters studies in educational leadership, I was keen to investigate middle leader involvement in whole school decision-making in my own workplace. General conversations showed that senior leaders in School A believed that middle leaders had various opportunities to experience and partake in whole school decision. In practice, from conversations and observation, it appeared that the middle leaders in School A did not share their viewpoint. I wished to explore why this misconception existed, identify the extent to which they collaborated in practice, try to pinpoint the barriers and make some suggestions to narrow this gap.

The senior leaders currently in role in School A consist of headteacher, the deputy headteachers and assistant headteachers. Busher *et al*, (2007, p405) define middle leaders as:

'...those people who hold middle-ranking posts in the hierarchy of a school, being neither senior leaders, such as headteachers or deputy headteachers, nor junior staff (although this term is never used) who are teachers, teaching assistants or clerical or site staff'.

Although there are a number of different middle leader positions in School A, I am studying solely curriculum leaders who are responsible for leading a team of people within their own curriculum area. This is because these middle leaders are perceived to be most involved in whole school decision making over others in School A by both senior and middle leaders.

The Research Journey

In the early stages of planning the research, a questionnaire was considered in order to collect the data about middle and senior leader perceptions about the practice of sharing whole school decision-making in School A. However, I intended to collect information specifically about perceptions, and not occurrences, and I surmised that this could not be achieved through a questionnaire. A questionnaire would elicit basic answers, the quality of which would vary vastly between participants. It would not allow me to attach explanations to my findings or explore participant perception of what they were describing

so a questionnaire was rejected at this stage. A more appropriate method to collect the data was through interviewing participants so they could be probed deeply about their perceptions. All the participants indicated very early on in the panning stage of the study that they were happy to co-operate but they also indicated that they could not commit time to both questionnaires and interviews.

Two participants were interviewed to check the interview questions provided enough information to answer the questions. Minor tweaks were made to the questions, in the main to turn closed questions into open questions to elicit more information, before they were used with the remaining participants. This was done in line with Glaser's (1992) recommendation that once the initial few cases had been collected and analysed for codes, the remainder of the cases are then added to increase the number of cases. All the participant interviews were carried out within a few months of each other during November 2011 and April 2012 to complete the data set. Glaser's (1998) ideas on grounded theory were used to analyse the interview data. In collecting together all the common themes and codes I was able to narrow these down to elicit the five common themes, which were linked to the two overarching concepts and these are explained and analysed in chapter 4.

I found that being an insider researcher presented many challenges and these have been elaborated on in chapter 2. I added documentary analysis and observation to further triangulate and to check the data and the findings was accurate. Retrospective permission was obtained for observation of meetings and some of the documentary analysis and this will be discussed further in the methodology chapter.

Initially, I wished to use more than one school but this would prove challenging in terms of participant access. As I was working full time, I was unable to carry out research in other schools and opted to carry out a small case study using a sample from my own school. It was more sensible to explore the culture of one school rather than trying to explore several sets of data comprising different school cultures and leadership styles. This would have made analysing the data and making links between concepts from different schools difficult. A case study of the school I worked in meant I could ensure my data was robust and this is discussed further in chapter 2.

Originally I explored distributed leadership as this was the terminology senior leaders in School A were themselves using, in their belief, that they were 'distributing' leadership to middle leaders because they were sharing decision making tasks with them. Harris (2007) defines distributed leadership as leadership that is shared widely across the school. Others

have stated that there are multiple leaders at different levels, both in formal and informal leadership roles, who share the task of leading the school (Spillane *et al* 2004). Timperley (2005, p396) develops this further and highlights that ‘distributed leadership is not the same as dividing task responsibilities among individuals who perform defined and separate organisational roles, but consists of interactions between leaders and followers’, therefore, making distributed leadership more about interactions and relationships between leaders as opposed to simply sharing leadership (Bennett *et al*, 2003). However, once the data was collected and analysed it became apparent distributed leadership, according to this definition, was not occurring in school A and what senior leaders were terming as ‘distributed leadership’ was in fact simply sharing and delegating a task to middle leaders.

I explored the concept of shared leadership and found that this was not the case in School A either and, what I was observing and what the data was suggesting, fitted in more with the concepts of working relationships and contrived collegiality (Hargreaves, 1994). My study began as exploring distributed leadership but the explanation to answer my research questions hinged more on how organisational culture was embedded in School A and through examining senior and middle leader working relationships. This will be further expanded on in the analysis in chapter 4.

Context of School

‘School A’ is a state secondary school, based in the North of England and caters for 11-16 year olds. It was also where I was employed full time as a curriculum leader during the life of this study. In order to keep the participants’ identities confidential and preserve their anonymity, they have all been referred to by pseudonyms and the school referred to as ‘School A’ throughout this study.

This school is similar to other local secondary schools in the immediate area, in terms of student numbers and personal circumstances. There is a cohort of 970 pupils on roll at during the study. The most recent Ofsted report shows that half the pupils are from an ethnic minority background with a large majority speaking English as an additional language (School A Ofsted Report, October 2012). Pupils entitled to free school meals and pupil attendance is above national average with the number of pupils with special educational needs lower than the national average. It is widely recognised that the local area the school based has high levels of crime and unemployment (Office for National Statistics, 2013). There is little parental involvement in school life although parental

support is high and this is reflected in parental responses included in the most recent Ofsted report (School A Ofsted Report, October 2012).

The headteacher has been in post for five years and was a deputy headteacher in the school before this. Alongside the headteacher, there are two deputy headteachers, one associate deputy headteacher, three assistant headteachers and one school business manager who make up the senior leadership team. The headteacher line manages the deputy headteachers and the assistant headteachers. The middle leadership team comprises of thirteen middle leaders who are titled ‘curriculum leaders’ and they are line managed by either a deputy headteacher or an assistant headteacher depending on their subject area.

Originally, there were a much smaller number of middle leaders in School A and they were called ‘curriculum leaders’. They were responsible for a large faculty area with a team of ‘subject leaders’ below them in the school hierarchy. The diagram below shows their job roles in place in the hierarchy at School A although in practice this was not how they were line managed.

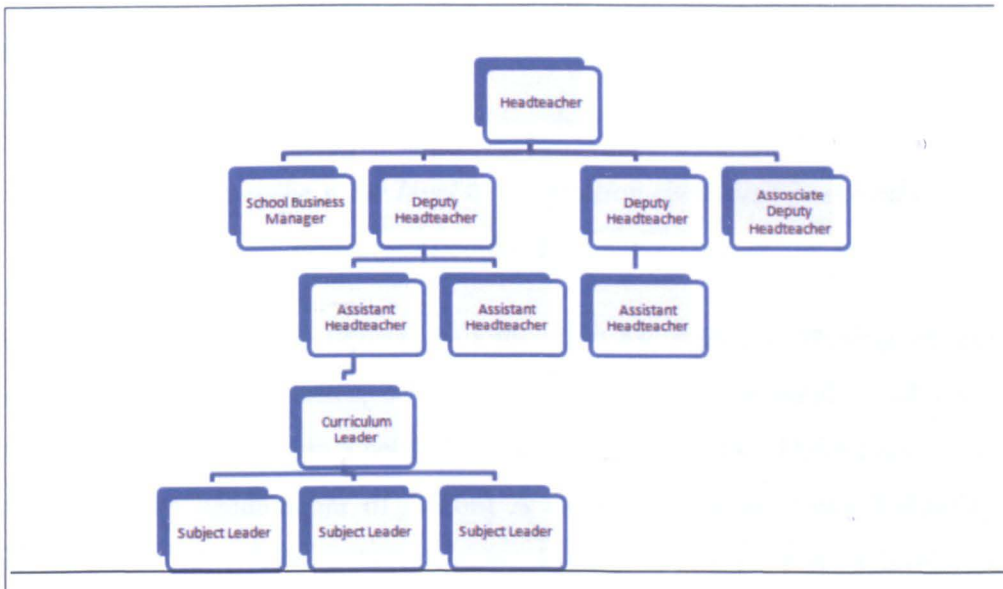


Figure 1 - Hierarchical chart for School A

For example, the curriculum leader for expressive arts had three separate subject leaders in charge of drama, art and music below them in the hierarchy and this person line managed all three of these subject areas. Conflict arose from subject leaders who were frustrated that they were doing the same level of work as curriculum leaders but were not being paid at the same rate. The headteacher decided that all the subject leaders would now be referred to as ‘curriculum leaders’ and the subject leader role would be phased entirely out of the hierarchy. Despite there being a general feeling across the school, from hearing talk in the staffroom, that the current middle leadership and senior leadership teams were too large

already this decision further increased the middle leadership team to a total of thirteen middle leaders with eight senior leaders. At the time of this study, all middle leaders, except two, and all members of the senior leadership team, except two, were recruited under the leadership of the current headteacher.

School A was involved in the first phase of the Labour Government's 'Building Schools for the Future' Programme and moved into a state of the art £30million building in September 2007. In the former building, there was a single staffroom where teaching staff and senior leaders all went during their free time before school started, particularly during morning break, lunchtime and after the school day had finished. This was to discuss items of relevance and socialise with colleagues both within and outside of their curriculum areas and there was a real sense of community in this staffroom. It is important to mention this as this may affect why balkanization exists in School A. One significant change in School A since moving into the new building is the main staffroom is no longer used. Each curriculum area has its own individual kitchen and socialising area. The interview data shows that this has further reinforced the issue of curriculum areas working individually and has increased feelings of isolation amongst the staff, particularly, middle leaders from each other. The impact of this will be explored further in chapter 4 as part of the findings but it is worth noting.

'...it's just not the same level of interaction there was in the other school and it's a real shame...' Curriculum Leader A

Hargreaves (1994, p213) defines balkanization as 'teachers working neither in isolation, nor with most of their colleagues as a whole school, but in smaller sub groups within the school community such as a secondary school department'. There appears to be a genuine attempt by the headteacher of School A to try and break down balkanization between subject areas and to refocus their thinking so they no longer view each other as competitors but work together as a collective team for the good of the whole school. It is clear that senior leaders have a genuine and passionate desire for middle leaders to be supportive of, and influence, whole school decision-making. This will be discussed further in chapter 4 as part of the discussion of findings.

The school is seeking ways to improve on their most recent Ofsted report and aims to persuade the middle leaders to work together beyond their individual departments. This was done through inviting middle leaders to some of the strategic senior leadership team meetings where an agenda item required a strategic decision to be made. It was also done

through developing in-house middle leader training and the use of a middle leader forum, which currently meets ten times with all the senior leadership team during the academic year. Senior leaders wish to encourage middle leaders to undertake responsibilities which extend beyond their departmental remits, as they believe by including middle leaders more that they may buy into the vision for the school more passionately and influence pupil outcomes.

Overview of National Context

There have been many governmental attempts to improve educational outcomes in the United Kingdom to make education in this country more effective. Keung (2008) argues government policy documents tend to be very general in nature and schools are often left to interpret and implement policies, therefore, potentially all decisions originate from policy makers, Ofsted and Government Departments as opposed to from the schools themselves. There has been a particular trend of trying to raise standards and making schools more accountable at a local authority level (Machin and Vignoles, 2005).

'We are reforming our school systems so that the parent has a choice of a good local state school for their child, teachers have the powers they need to keep discipline in the classroom and the exams system is rigorous, respected and on a par with the world's best'. Conservative Party Policies for Schools (2013, p 1)

At the time of writing, the current government state that they are trying to establish teaching as a well respected and highly regarded profession. They aim to improve basic literacy and numeracy skills and have devised specific strategies to target this (Conservative Party Policies for Schools 2013). There is a prescriptive national curriculum reinforced by an Ofsted inspection regime focusing on results and data targets. Although there had been an introduction of vocational qualifications by the previous Labour government, these are now being downplayed by the current government in favour of more academic qualifications (*ibid* 2013). The current government has risen the age of participation to the age of 17 years old from September 2013 and increased fees for university education. This changing political background for state education, which operates in the public sector, is subject to frequent legislative and policy changes (Bush and Coleman, 2006; The Schools White Paper, 2010). This means that school leadership teams have to be flexible and respond to increasing accountability (Smith and Bell, 2011).

Another area of interest is the greater role of parents in school choice. Parents have a range of choices as to which school their children attend with the option of independent schools,

faith schools, grammar schools, free schools and academies and this has caused much competition for school places therefore rendering schools more accountable to parents for pupil outcomes (Bates, 2011). Parents are able to be representatives on governing bodies of their children's schools and there is greater need for schools to increase their results as school league tables are publically published and show the position of schools in comparison to one another. Therefore, having an understanding of whole school issues is important to middle leaders in running their departments to manage these constant changes and initiatives. They also need an understanding of how a school operates at a whole school meaning middle leaders can put across their point of view to senior leaders (Poultney, 2007). As a result of these initiatives, there is a need for headteachers to collaborate and share leadership with others in their schools (Hammersley-Fletcher, 2005). Therefore, opportunities for middle leaders to take part in whole school leadership have arisen that may not have been possible or necessary before these government initiatives.

Educational leadership has had a lot of attention over the past decade with much thinking about the importance of developing collaborative school leaders (Sergiovanni, 2004; Busher, 2007; Datnow, 2011; Klar, 2012; Mcculla, 2012). There is a less of an emphasis on top-down leadership models of authority and more emphasis on collaborative practices (Arrowsmith, 2007; Harris, 2008; Robinson, 2009). Schools are expected to deliver better outcomes each year with diminishing resources (Grubb, 2009) and the idea of flatter hierarchies and more collaboration is seen as a way to ease pressure on the senior leadership teams. The Schools White Paper (2010) entitled 'The Importance of Teaching' emphasises the greater role of teachers in sustaining school improvement and states 'after the quality of teaching, the quality of school leadership is the most important determinant of pupils' success' (The Schools White Paper 2010, section 2.37).

Chapman *et al* (2008) indicate that there are significant changes in the leadership roles of those working in schools and it is unlikely traditional transactional leadership styles will be adequate to meet the needs of the new requirements. These include the Ofsted inspection framework, the new National Curriculum re-introduced in 2002, the Building Schools for the Future project (BSF) and the requirement for schools to be working with other schools and learning communities (Dimmock, 2012). There appears to be an emphasis on leadership development programmes on the national agenda (Schools White Paper 2010; Mcculla, 2012). The National College for Teaching and Leadership, along with other providers, have offered courses, such as the NCSL Middle Leadership Development Programme (MLDP), aiming to specifically develop middle leaders to become more effective in their schools and to try and share leadership amongst others in the school apart

from the senior leadership team. The MLDP was a middle leadership development programme concerned with building capacity and sustaining leadership and change at a middle leadership level. Townsend (2011) argues that the work of the National College for Teaching and Leadership is critical to leaders in schools understanding leadership context and development. With this increased interest in leadership development, the role of secondary middle leaders is evolving (Bush, 2002; Hobbs, 2006; Poultney, 2007; Klar, 2012). Middle leadership has changed focus from routine departmental administration to leading people as the agenda for schools is now about obtaining leadership excellence at a collaborative whole school level as opposed to senior teachers of subject areas (Bush, 2002).

Headteachers are more like ‘managing directors (Day *et al* 2000) and this changing face of leadership means whole school decision-making is no longer just the domain of headteachers (Bogotch, 2011). Increasingly, middle managers are referred to as ‘middle leaders’ and this change has helped clarify that schools are no longer about managing but more about leading people and, more importantly, effective leadership can be demonstrated by more than one person (Hobbs, 2006). Senior and middle leaders should aim to function as both leaders and decision makers as they work to bring about fundamental changes in their schools. Top down delegation is acceptable when conveying instructions to be carried out, however, in order to build leadership capacity and consider different perspectives from the ‘front line’ of teaching and policy implementation, means leadership is more effective when it is less ‘top down’ and more horizontal. These concepts will be explored in Chapter 3.

Despite there being a lot of academic knowledge, outlining the middle leader role and their day to day work, there have been little practical suggestions as to how to develop this further (Wise and Bush, 1999; Adey, 2000; Bennett, 2006; Bennett *et al*, 2007; Jarvis, 2012). This thesis will offer some practical ways forward in involving middle leaders in whole school decision-making in School A and will be reported in such a way as to allow middle and senior leaders in School A to understand the findings of this study and use them to develop practice.

Research Questions and Methodology

The main research questions of this study are outlined below. However, in line with grounded theory tradition, the answers to these questions will emerge from the interview data and responses will be captured into one of the three general questions. Decision

making in School A will be explored by gathering thoughts and perceptions of middle and senior leaders. Grounded theory has been chosen as the methodology to allow key themes related to decision-making to emerge from the interviews will try to explain what is happening in terms of whole school decision-making and will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2. The interviews will be triangulated through observations and through documentary analysis to further strengthen findings.

There is one main research area with three sub-sections.

What does whole school decision-making currently look like in School A?

- 1) What is the middle leader perspective on this?*
- 2) What is the senior leader perspective on this?*
- 3) What are the ways in which middle and senior leaders can develop existing practice to move collaborative whole school decision-making forward?*

Chapter 4 shows ‘relationships’ and ‘organisational culture’ emerged as the two main overarching concepts. Five further sub-themes of ‘balkanization’, ‘collaboration’, ‘capacity building’, ‘job role’ and ‘hierarchy’ emerged from the data and were of importance to explore the research areas. These will be discussed further in Chapter 4 in the data findings and discussion.

Overall, this chapter has introduced the study aims and explains why it was chosen.. There has been a brief explanation of the wider national and school context and an overview of the thesis content provided. The next chapter will discuss research design and the methodology chosen to answer the questions and explore the research journey.

Chapter 2: - Methodology

Aims of the Project

Methodology is the theory of knowledge and offers methods of best obtaining knowledge in order to construct further knowledge (Opie and Sikes, 2004). This chapter discusses the suitability of the research design and data collection methods chosen. There will be a discussion justifying why interviewing, observation and documentary analysis were appropriate data collection methods to illuminate how whole school decision-making takes place in School A. This chapter will clarify how the sample was chosen and ethical considerations as an insider researcher.

For this study, data was needed from middle and senior leader participants and this was gathered through interviewing, and triangulated through observation and documentary analysis. The interview questions were semi-structured for focus but restrictions were not posed during participant responses to allow key categories and themes to emerge from the data in the grounded theory tradition.

The final findings were compared with the existing body of literature for validity and credibility. The conclusions and recommendations were communicated to middle and senior leaders in 'School A'. This knowledge will be disseminated more widely through publishing in appropriate journals such as School Leadership Today and Educational Management and Leadership (EMAL) as research papers. It is hoped that through publication the research findings will be shared across similar individual schools who wish to instigate change in this area, based on the extent they perceive School A best 'fits' and reflects their own schools. However, the main aim of this study is for the findings to be authentic and useful to School A.

Ontology and Epistemology

The researcher's ontological and epistemological position in terms of 'where I am coming from' (Burrell and Morgan, 1979) should be probed before choosing a research design.

*'To be located in a particular paradigm is to view the world in a particular way'.
(ibid 1979, p 24)*

How I make sense of the world, my personal beliefs concerning how decision-making should take place in schools and whether middle leaders should be part of the process had potential ramifications as to how data was collected, analysed and interpreted (Berg and Lune, 2012). In order to be reflective and rigorous it is important to explain these concerns

have been acknowledged. Ontological assumptions are concerned with whether the researcher sees the world objectively or subjectively. The objective standpoint believes the world is observable through quantitative measurable data. The subjective stance disagrees there is a single explanation and believes many different meanings can be attached to people's perceptions. Epistemological assumptions are concerned with how knowledge is constructed, what 'truth' is and how we know and recognise it. Central to this is how the researcher shows the methods of data collection reflect 'truth' for the reader. In school decision making there can be many 'truths' and Munhall (2012, p12) reinforces 'questioning the idea of absolute truth and acknowledging the possibility of many truths' in qualitative research.

In 'School A', some aspects of whole school decision-making are done voluntarily, for example, decisions about how to spend the school budget and the extent to which middle leaders involve themselves and contribute in middle leader meetings. Other aspects are imposed through external accountability, for example, a prescribed National Curriculum and suggestions of national strategies to be followed. It is important to consider whether middle and senior leaders believe whole school decision-making takes place irrespective of their wishes or whether they believe they are making choices and initiating action. It should be considered whether they believe their behaviour is determined by outside forces or if they are acting of their own free will.

My viewpoint is middle leaders and senior leaders do not behave in a predestined way and have choices. If I believed whole school decision-making was a scientific and predetermined process then observation and quantitative data would answer the research questions. School decision-making is underpinned by actions, behaviours, and feelings of leaders and is very personal to each individual. It is influenced by school culture; interactions and relationships meaning it cannot be measured scientifically. This study is taking a subjective ontological and epistemological viewpoint, as gathering knowledge around perceptions of school decision-making is not static and observable. It is gained through conversation where knowledge differs due to personal beliefs and values; therefore, this research study is suited to a qualitative approach.

Interpretivism and Positivism

The positivistic paradigm believes that data is quantifiable and measurable. Interpretivists argue human behaviour depends on individual thoughts and beliefs and scientific measurement is not appropriate. Interpretivism accepts multiple realities and that 'things

can be seen in different ways, by different people, in different times and circumstances' (Denscombe, 2010, p97). This research aims to understand and explain reasons behind behaviour so interpretive paradigm assists with making sense of participant perspectives. If this research was focusing on measuring the extent of participant behaviour then a positivistic design would be a better fit. As I am exploring behaviour for meaning (Gage, 1997) an interpretivist paradigm was chosen.

Interpretivists focus on interpreting participant meanings and the researcher attempts to enter the site without preconceptions (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007). Their constructions are based on what is happening; therefore, meaning comes from descriptions and perceptions so interviews, observations, and narratives are the main methods of data collection.

'For interpretivists, reality is not 'out there' as an amalgam of external phenomena waiting to be uncovered as 'facts' but a construct in which people understand reality in different ways. It may be some human groups perceive reality similarly, but this does not diminish the potential for reality to be construed differently'. (ibid 2007, p24)

Positivism does not acknowledge people are individuals with different thoughts and they believe that only observable information can be considered knowledge, therefore, feelings are not considered knowledge as they cannot be quantified or observed (Morrison, 2007). An interpretivist qualitative approach allows observations and meanings to be explored into participant interactions and relationships that would not be possible with a positivistic paradigm with a quantitative approach.

Methodological Approaches

Consideration of research paradigms determined the method of data collection (Creswell, 2003). A qualitative method was most appropriate over quantitative as 'human affairs cannot be studied with scientific methods' (Gage 2007, p152).

Denscombe (2010, p325) claims qualitative research 'relies on transforming information from observations, reports and recordings into data in the form of written words or visual images'. Questions are asked of participants, observations are made and descriptions taken. The researcher collects this data, checks it is collected reliably and then interprets it to come to fair conclusions. Bassey (1999) defines three categories of empirical research:

- Theoretical research is carried out for understanding. Here the researcher is not evaluating or changing what is happening but recording what is happening without making value judgements.
- Evaluative research is to understand, evaluate, and make judgements. The outcome is someone else will use his or her findings to either initiate or not initiate change. This study is evaluative as I will not make changes upon concluding the study but senior leaders in the school may be interested in instigating changes.
- Action research is a form of self-reflective enquiry where the researcher makes changes in context. They introduce, plan, and implement change but this research is not classified as action research as the study is not primarily intended to specifically plan and implement change from the findings.

A qualitative approach means that the findings can be specific to the context of School A.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is a methodology commonly used in social science research (Denscombe, 2010; Bryman, 2012) and highly regarded particularly in education and health studies (Thomas and James, 2006). The data is intended to be relevant to participants so there is less pressure to ensure participants and the research site is representative. However, it should be recognised that the data is a 'snapshot' of what is happening (Mehmetoglu and Altinay, 2006) so care should be taken not to interpret it as the 'truth' but more of a conceptual insight of a particular time.

Grounded theory is appropriate for this study as it is rooted in pragmatism and concerned with the practical as opposed to the abstract (Berg and Lune, 2012). If the theory generated works well in practice for participants in School A and is meaningful to them then this can be classed as a good theory (Toom, 2012). It fits the interpretive school of thought of generating theories as opposed to testing existing theories in the positivist paradigm (Charmaz, 2006; Denscombe, 2010). The purpose of grounded theory is to develop theories, explain situations, and try to perceive and present another perceptions of their world (Wuest, 2012).

Grounded theory arose from the work of Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967) and is a method of gathering facts, that will create a thick description, breaking this description up and reconstructing it, which will then yield a theory. However, after publication the two theorists separated their thoughts (Glaser, 1992; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Glaser remained true to the original method and believed Strauss and Corbin's model too

prescriptive and claimed that it did not allow themes to naturally emerge (Kelle, 2005; Charmaz, 2006; Goldkuhl and Cronholm, 2010; Wuest, 2012). This study follows tradition of Barney Glaser as opposed to the Straussian model as Glaser's model allows data to emerge into categories whereas Strauss and Corbin's method means that data is placed into predetermined categories (Allen, 2010).

Glaser remained focused on sampling, coding, and memoing whereas Strauss and Corbin focused on analysis and categories for coding (Heath and Cowley, 2004). I choose Glaser's method for this study as it lends itself more to the original method of grounded theory (Dunne, 2011; Heath and Cowley, 2004; Matavire and Brown, 2013). His method begins with wondering about the research area under scrutiny and this emerging theory is not focused on testing hypotheses but originates from data collected (Dunne, 2011). There is an emphasis on the concepts and the links between them come from the data making the theory more credible as it is grounded in the data. Coding is less rigorous with constant comparison of one interview data set with another so categories emerge over time.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) endorse there should be a starting point, therefore the theory does not emerge but is forced, as it fits in with very structured questions about the topic which have been posed at the start. Theoretical sensitivity for Strauss comes from the tools and the methods and not from the data and the observer interprets the theory as opposed to it emerging and being grounded in the data. The researcher is active and not passive and the data is structured to reveal the theory. Coding for Strauss is far more rigorous than Glaser and has a more defined technique to it so it not as open to interpretation as perhaps Glaser's method may be. Memoing is an essential part of Glaser's grounded theory method and assisted with being a reflexive researcher. As the data was collected and interpreted memoing meant I was aware of being influenced through exposure to literature and existing knowledge that I may have been exposed to before this study commenced.

Grounded theory goes beyond simply inspecting and describing data (Goulding, 1999). Coding is the initial stage and the building blocks of theory and memoing is when reflections and observations about the data are noted down to facilitate links between the codes. It is imperative to move from coding to memoing, as the theory will emerge from the links that are made between the concepts. In this study, the memos were categorised and linked together to ensure that the claims were strong and were grounded within the data. When using memoing it is possible to write detailed notes of initial interpretations of interview transcripts to crystallise concepts. Later on, when writing up the analysis, the existing literature was woven in and this helped to crystallise the theory. I believe that the

findings are grounded in the data, located within existing theories and that there is greater validity and applicability if existing accepted theories are used to further strengthen findings which emerge from the data.

In grounded theory, it is expected that the researcher enters the field with a 'blank canvas' or 'tabula rasa' (Kelle, 2005; Oktay, 2012) but others have argued it is difficult to ignore existing literature and that it can be useful to build on the work of others (Bryman, 2012; Robson, 2011). Thomas and James (2006) claim to use grounded theory we have to lose sight of previous thinking, deny what we already know and allow the piecing together of the coding to generate new understandings. Some academics have argued other literature should be introduced in the analysis stage (Kelle, 2005; Seaman, 2008) as this is primarily what researchers do, build on existing knowledge to improve or add new knowledge (Goldkuhl and Cronholm, 2010). Denscombe (2010) questions how researchers can forget prior knowledge already exists and Bryman (2012) agree that it is not possible for researchers to not be influenced by current thinking in their area or the existing theory. Glaser's (1992) own reasoning is that knowledge is everywhere, all knowledge is valid and we should feel unconstrained in its collection, use and analysis.

The issue between Glaser over Strauss is when to introduce the literature and how extensive it should be. Glaser and Strauss (1967) argued it should not be done prior to data collection. This goes against most methodologies as the literature is used to build the study (Dunne, 2011). Glaser (1998) indicates conducting literature review prior to the study, when the themes are not known, is wasted time as the reading may not be relevant. He advocates letting themes emerge and then adding in the literature afterwards and this was the method followed in this study. Glaser (1992) does not advocate a blanket ban on literature, it is when and how it should be used which is the issue not that it should be excluded. He suggests introducing literature once emerging categories stabilise but not too early to influence. Stern (2007) endorses this for academic honesty and to show how the study contributes to existing knowledge. It is unrealistic to claim to be free of literature (Cutcliffe, 2000; Dunne, 2011; Heath and Cowley, 2004) as I had used it in my Masters studies. There is no reason why a researcher cannot be self-aware and appreciate previous knowledge but not impose it on the data (Urquhart, 2007).

I introduced detailed reading once the data was analysed to avoid prior concept contamination but it must be acknowledged I did study this topic as part of my Masters studies and already had some prior knowledge of a small number of concepts that emerged from my data. A literature review beforehand is not considered good practice to avoid

fitting the data to the literature (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Oktay 2012). I had to ensure I did not emphasise any preconceived ideas and remained open to discovery and new information (Denscombe, 2010) so the literature was included once the data had been analysed so the academic literature was related to and matched themes that emerged from my data.

Grounded theory is time consuming due to collecting the data, transcribing it and analysing it into codes, categories and concepts (Bryman, 2012). Constant comparison is used when analysing data so new codes and concepts are added as they emerge, differences and similarities are highlighted and common ones grouped together. There can be some confusion as to what is being examined in the early stages (Allan, 2003). Coffey and Atkinson (1996) argue by chunking up the data it may lose context and flow but line by line coding means many codes are generated so the researcher should collect common ones together and make links between them to create the concepts. The theory is built up from the data by gradually adding in more and more cases therefore data collection in the field starts early on and may continue for some time (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). An advantage is the researcher can check their emerging theory at the stage of production, rather than after analysis, so the theory remains firmly grounded within the data. It permits freedom and flexibility (Glaser, 1992) for the researcher to explore the field and allow issues to emerge.

There are benefits to using grounded theory as a detailed, rigorous and systematic methodology can provide a unique insight into the field (Jones and Alony, 2011). There have been many positive examples of researchers using grounded theory over the past two decades to explore issues in education (Kozma, 1985; Palmer and Marra, 2004; Makopoulou and Armour, 2011; Barber, 2012), however, there are some critics of grounded theory despite its popularity (Bryman, 2012). It is a time consuming method rendering the researcher impossible to plan and timetable a study, as the length of the study is dependent on the participants' interactions with the researcher. There is the reality of the analysis taking many different directions before the theory emerges (Goulding, 1999; Allan, 2003; Barker, 2009). There may be nothing substantial or a theory to emerge from the field and Glaser (1978) refers to this as 'social process' but the researcher would not know this until the data has been analysed.

The experience of grounded theory

Traditionally, when choosing a methodology most research paradigms suggest that an initial pilot study is conducted (Stake 1995; Charmaz 2006; Bryman, 2010; Denscombe,

2012). This initial set of data is analysed and the necessary changes are made to make it a more robust method of collecting data before the main data for the study is collected. This pilot study data is not included as part of the main data set (Bassey, 1999; Berg and Lune, 2012). I followed Glaser's (1998) process for collecting an initial data set and then added more cases to it. Glaser, or indeed Strauss and Corbin, (1998) do not refer to collecting an initial set of pilot study data. They both advocate starting with a small set of data and gradually adding more cases to this to make up the final study.

Although Glaser has not stipulated the use of a pilot study, there are examples of existing grounded theory research studies (Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe, 2005; Dawes and Larson, 2011) which have made use of a pilot study to orientate the study early on and see which concepts and codes emerged from an initial collection of data. Although it has not been used in this study, a pilot study is a potentially useful method of getting an early feel for the field and potential themes that could influence the main study through analysing a small collection of data. As I was an insider researcher and already worked at School A, I did not feel it necessary to conduct a pilot study to build a relationship with participants or to get a feel of the place as an outsider would need to. It has been argued by Hayhoe (2012) that in a grounded theory study the pilot study could be the open coding for the data collected and analysed for general themes and concepts. In the same way that a pilot study orientates a study, the open coding data could be referred to as being the equivalent to replace the pilot study in grounded theory (Hayhoe, 2012). The concepts are later connected together to create the theory and this could be included as part of the main study hence the data is collected together and analysed together. Some researchers have argued it is necessary to conduct a pilot study to validate the research question (Nunes *et al*, 2010) and in this case, the open coding sufficed to do this.

Glaser (1998) suggests that the researcher enters the field as soon as they start the project. He advocates the researcher aiming to be immersed in the field and start the data gathering as opposed to trying to follow a specific grounded theory process. He suggests collecting an initial set of data and analysing this carefully to see what early themes and codes emerge. The next stage is to keep adding cases and their analysis over time and comparing all the interview data with each other until no new codes emerge and there are no new concepts. It is for this reason that there is no 'distinct' pilot study data in this study as the data was all used as one data set. The initial data was combined and used as main data and other data collected was added to this over the life of the study to either refute or strengthen the categories that had emerged (Glaser, 1998). The data set was analysed as one and triangulated with observation data and documentary analysis to ensure it was

robust. It could be argued that if initial data is collected and analysed separately then this is not entering the field 'tabula rasa' as Glaser advocates and may even be influencing the researcher's view of what to look for in the main study and introduce bias instead of simply exploring what is in the data. The other reason a pilot study was not conducted was that I was reliant on a relatively small convenience sample of participants who wanted to take part. It would not be possible to interview people twice for the main and pilot study and also it would leave me short of people to interview if I interviewed some for the pilot study.

There is a need to start gathering the data to see what emerges rather than meticulously plan the project (Heath and Cowley, 2004) and this is challenging as a first time researcher and felt like stepping into the unknown at times as the research process was led by the stage of data and analysis as opposed to by the researcher. Glaser (1998) suggests the researcher put aside the anxiety of doing it right and discovers which approach helps them to achieve data balance and interpretation that will help them to produce a grounded theory. Although I enjoyed using grounded theory, it was not a clear-cut method in terms of analysing data as it first appears and is time consuming due to the constant data collection and analysis (Mehmetoglu and Altinay, 2006).

In the analysis stage, I started to think about which studies and concepts I was familiar with that could be useful and which concepts I needed to do more research into and for which find existing empirical studies and academic theories. This improved rigour when considering which concepts most resonated with the memoing of the data. I learnt engaging with grounded theory in this way meant I was introduced to academic theories, models and concepts I was unfamiliar with to deepen my own knowledge, for example, leader member exchange was a theory I was unfamiliar with before data analysis. Literature and empirical studies that best matched the memoing were accessed as necessary during the analysis stage to draw conclusions and justify or refute what the data was indicating (Glaser, 1992).

Glaser (1978) claims the literature should be introduced once the categories are stable and that reading should be wide to alert to possibilities that may emerge and this was something which was time consuming and at times a little unfocused. I found some of the reading was not relevant to my data analysis. If I had identified hypotheses and preconceptions then I may have moved away from participants concerns (Heath and Cowley, 2004). It is important to remain focused on participant interpretations and meanings in the School A and this was very challenging when doing grounded theory. It is

very easy to become disorientated when exploring literature after the analysis and memoing was useful to ensure my analysis was grounded in and allowed to emerge from the data and not from the themes within the literature I had read (Matavire and Brown, 2013).

Glaser and Strauss (1967) advocated the theory produced should be useful and increase the understanding in the area under research for the participants and this was important to this study. Grounded theory does raise some credibility and accuracy issues (Lars-Johan, 2011), but a framework Glaser (1998) suggested of testing the theory for 'fit', 'workability', 'relevance' and 'modifiability' could be used as a criteria for grounded theory to be considered credible. Fit is another term for whether the concepts describe the patterns in the data and this is done by comparing existing categories with the new data as they are collected and analysed. Workability is when the concepts match the main participant concerns, relevance is whether the theory is relevant to the participants and modifiability is when the theory is never considered as being 'wrong' but is modified during analysis. This was new learning as I had to ensure that any theory I produced fitted against these four criteria to ensure the research was accurate and credible.

Case Study

Berg and Lune (2012, p 325) argue that the purpose of a case study is to:-

'...systematically investigate an event or a set of related events with the specific aim of describing and explaining these phenomena...'

Stake (1995) suggests researchers have different reasons for choosing cases to study and identifies intrinsic case studies where the researcher has a personal interest in the case. In this study, exploring decision-making in my own workplace was intrinsically interesting to me from an employee perspective. The advantage of case study research is it allows in depth analysis (Denscombe, 2010) between middle and senior leaders participants' working relationships. Interviews, documentary analysis and observation made it possible to triangulate and compare participant perceptions against what was actually happening in practice meaning that the approach was rigorous.

Access to the research site and trying to investigate things at the time they occurred was challenging, however, my being on-site full time as an employee and being involved in all middle leader consultations in my role in School A assisted with this. The research aim was to provide a picture of what is happening in School A in terms of decision-making so

just School A was chosen, ensuring the working environment and organisational culture was similar for all participants. I did not feel it was possible to mix data from different schools but better to obtain richer data from one case study school and analyse and validate it through triangulation (Kempster and Parry, 2011). A single case study of School A fitted in well with this small-scale research for a lone researcher.

Sample

It was important to ensure that the study did not fail through sample choice (Cohen *et al*, 2000) or that flawed sampling undermined findings (Burton, 2000) although a qualitative research sample size tend to be small (Sikes, 2000). It was impossible to sample all middle and senior leaders in School A due to time constraints and I had limited control over participants who could be chosen from School A so the sample was serendipitous (Plowright, 2011). I was only able to interview the participants who volunteered to take part in the study.

I also found that not all middle and senior leaders in School A wished to take part so a smaller convenience sample was used. This is where the participants are most close at hand or available to the researcher (Opie and Sikes, 2004; Berg and Lune, 2012). Invitations to take part in the study were offered to all senior and middle leaders in School A and a small sample emerged from all those who volunteered to take part. Four senior leaders and four middle leaders responded. This was classed as a non-probability sample (Babbie, 2013) as it included a specific group of leaders in the school excluding general teaching staff, heads of year and pastoral leaders and is relevant when results are not generalised (Mjoset, 2005). Berg and Lune (2012) point out the difficulty researchers can have gaining access to a site but this was not a barrier in this case as School A, where I was employed, was chosen for participant accessibility.

As a lone researcher, working full time and conducting research part time, it would be very challenging to access other schools. In another site, it would have been challenging to obtain additional data for documentary analysis that was available in School A to all employees and, with the headteacher's permission, to me as a researcher. Walford (2001) has argued most researchers tend to choose a site that is most convenient for them as opposed to the participants. However, he does acknowledge time constraints, financial and personal costs may mean a researcher may choose a particular site over another as was the case with School A in this research.

Approximate Age Range of Participant (rounded up to nearest 5 years)	Role in School A	Gender	Number of Years in Current Role
40	Curriculum Leader	M	2
35	Curriculum Leader	F	5
40	Curriculum Leader	F	1
35	Curriculum Leader	M	4
35	Senior Leadership Team – Assistant Headteacher	M	3
50	Senior Leadership Team – Deputy Headteacher	M	6
50	Senior Leadership Team – Headteacher	M	6
40	Senior Leadership Team – Assistant Headteacher	F	3

Table 1 - Characteristics of Sample from School A

All participants who volunteered took part in the study, however in the case that any participant decided to withdraw there would have been concern that the data collected may be too small (Bryman and Cramer, 2004). I have used observations and documentary

evidence to further add depth to strengthen and triangulate the findings to make the data richer and deeper.

Insider Researcher – Validity, Reliability and Credibility

Validity and reliability are the extent to which the researcher can demonstrate their data is accurate and appropriate (Denscombe, 2010). This study aims to reassure the reader the data has been produced in line with good practice. Triangulation using contrasting data from participant interviews, literature, documentary analysis and observations show the data is robust and in line with existing theories and empirical studies. Respondent validation is where an account of the findings is given to participants for them to check researcher perception of the data (Bryman, 2012) and transcripts were given to all participants but many decided not to read them although the data they contained was validated through follow up conversations to check researcher perception matched what participants intended.

Kanuha (2000) defined ‘insider research’ as conducted with participants with whom the researcher is a member. There has been much debate whether researchers should be members of the population they are studying as they have insider knowledge, which could be considered a disadvantage. Outside researchers, who are not part of the group of people they are studying, may gain findings that are more objective because they are viewing the field from the outside (Murray and Lawrence, 2000; Mercer, 2007; Costley *et al*, 2010). Instead of considering insider and outsider research as two separate entities, it is also possible to think of them as being on a continuum (Mercer, 2007) and this resonates with this study, as I was an outsider in some respects but an insider in others. Mercer (2007) argues that the researcher moves along the continuum depending on whom they are interviewing at the time, the research location and the stage the research is at. It could be argued I could be classed as an outsider researcher when it came to knowledge and experience in some aspects. I was an insider researcher because the middle leaders were my peers, we carried out a similar role in school, albeit within different subject areas, and we worked at the same school. However, I could be considered an outsider because I rarely speak to middle leaders outside of official meetings due to the balkanised nature of the school. My main contact with the senior leaders in the school was via my senior leader line manager as opposed to senior leaders as a group so I could be legitimately classed as an outsider here. The interviews themselves felt individual with each different participant (Mullings, 1999). It could be argued the data provided an objective account because I was an outsider to some of the participants for these reasons. Some of the middle and senior

leader participants became employed at School A after I had started my research while others changed job roles within School A. I did not know them all personally and did not discuss the research, or its progress, with any of the participants during the study.

As I was an employee of School A, being an insider presented many opportunities as well as some barriers to overcome. I chose to use my own school as a research site so participant access was easier for those who were willing to take part. It was possible to be more flexible as to when interviews could be carried out and access privileged documentary and observation information, with permission from participants and the headteacher, than an outsider may do so with more limited access to the school (Unluer, 2012). This additional information led to triangulation of the interviews with practice that provided a wealth of additional data to give an accurate reflection of what was happening in the field so the study did not rely solely on verbal accounts. Anderson and Jones (2000) raise the point that participants may have a construction of reality that may not always be a reflection of what others may consider reality and this is where triangulation was of critical importance for reliability and validity.

I was able to chase up missing data and follow up any gaps when necessary so there was continuity to my data (Unluer, 2012). I did not need to ask for clarification in interviews as I already understood the language and organisational culture of School A but it was possible to consult on and question what I did not understand. Having an understanding of the core values and the formal and informal power structure of School A, which will be elaborated on in the analysis chapter, helped me to make more sense of my data and contextualise it (Unluer, 2012).

The issue with all interviews is how to know the informant is telling the truth (Alvesson, 2010). It is possible for the researcher to check information independently, as it will corroborate with other secondary sources such as the existing literature and empirical studies, but it is challenging to verify thoughts and feelings of participants. A main source of triangulation with grounded theory is to look at the themes emerging across a range of interview data and not relying on one transcription as being the 'correct' version or truth. The measures I have included to ensure the credibility of my interview data are to check against other sources such as existing literature, other similar existing published studies, and across interviews. I have also compared the interview data to observations I had made and through analysing official documents, such as minutes of meetings and the school improvement plan, to check if they corroborated.

I had an established rapport with participants which made the interviewing relationship more comfortable, therefore, I was able to phrase questions in such a way that would assist with eliciting data which would be useful to answering my research questions. I knew what to ask about and, more importantly, how to ask it and this may something an outsider researcher would have struggled with (Kerkstetter, 2012). Mercer (2007) agrees with Platt (1981) and refers to researchers working in their workplace as having a better grasp of the environment their participants are working in. Due to this established intimacy (Bonner and Tolhurst, 2002) in School A, I was able to make the link between situations and events and know the sensitivities of pursuing particular lines of enquiry. It was possible to explain findings and the links between them in context in more depth than would have been possible in an unfamiliar site without long-term observation and getting to know the field. This was not to say sensitivities were ignored (Preedy and Riches, 1988) but I was able to phrase questions to obtain information without upsetting colleagues. Although there was a privileged insight into the participants' world, there is an argument that it may not be able to see the too obvious which may be important and so obvious questions are not asked (Hockey, 1993). It could be argued the middle and senior leaders assumed I already knew things as I already know the politics and how the school works (Unluer, 2012).

I limited my own contributions to conversations and during the interviews so the data was not biased. I did not lead the participants to say things or prompt them in any way.

Platt (1981, p76) claims interviewing one's peers has advantages.

'One's peers have a variety of relevant characteristics; they are in a diffuse sense one's social equals, they are one's equals in role-specific senses, they share the same background knowledge and subcultural understandings, and they are members of the same groups of communities'.

In light of this, care was taken not to introduce my own bias and view the findings subjectively. I collected data without any prejudgement and had external supervisors who could check for bias in my reporting. I kept memos as an audit trail of my thoughts on the data as opposed to prejudging what I was expecting to find. I am familiar with the internal politics, the jargon used by participants and their preferred ways of doing things in School A at an operating level for middle and senior leaders. Familiarity can lead to loss of objectivity (Unluer 2012) but there is an argument that this information can be used to obtain richer data (Coghlan, 2003, Costley *et al*, 2010). Rose (1985, p 77) points out there can be no neutrality but 'a greater or less awareness of one's biases'. Familiarity was an

issue in terms of bias but I feel I overcame this as this study is a collection of many participant perspectives with the findings traceable to the data (Glaser 1992). If I had collected interview data, and not triangulated it, then it would be possible to argue the data could be biased.

Interviewees may feel more comfortable with people they know and talk more openly (Berg and Lune, 2012) and may provide richer more detailed data than perhaps they might to a visiting researcher. This does not always mean participants feel at ease to express themselves or they may feel obliged or pressured to participate against their wishes because they know the researcher as a colleague (Costley *et al*, 2010). Foster (1994) noted how the language changed when she conducted interviews and how her participants began to behave more formally during her interviews. Participants become comfortable quite late on, despite knowing the researcher well, as interviewing is an unfamiliar context for them to interact in and this was apparent in my interviews. There may be an emphasis on shared phenomena during the interview as this is common for both participant and researcher (Corbin Dwyer and Buckle, 2009).

It is fair to say I was perceived in the role of a researcher when I was interviewing participants and as a middle leader when I was carrying out my duties as a colleague (DeLyser, 2001; Unluer, 2012). It was clear to participants when I would be collecting data. If there was any doubt whatsoever on my part then specific permission was asked of the participants and permission was granted. I did not use any overheard conversations which were not intended for me to hear although I did include, with participants' permission, any conversations which they had directly with me, informally, which I thought were relevant to answering my thesis questions. If this did occur at any point during the day, I recorded this at the earliest opportunity in my memoing and considered this information when making links between the concepts. There was no formal plan to these conversations they occurred naturally throughout the working day. I did not wish, at any point in the study, to collect any covert data that participants were unaware of. Meetings and observations carried out around school were not covert. I am a respected middle leader by both my middle leader peers and senior leaders, I was both a colleague, as well as a researcher, and they felt about to trust me to share the findings of the study in a professional manner.

Most of the participants in School A were familiar with colleagues carrying out small research projects as part of a school funded Masters degree programme so it was not unusual for participants to perceive each other as colleagues and researchers. The

difference was that my research was for a longer period of time and more likely to be published in academic journals.

In terms of role duality this assisted me as I was already accepted in the school although I tried to limit contaminating my data, as I did not have much contact with my participants other than in a 'work context'. This meant I was not able to interfere with participant thinking and did not share anything with them, however during the working day my research was not of a great priority to them. I was not employed in a position where I would be able to influence policy or practice in terms of middle and senior working relationships in School A or how they choose to collaborate. I am young in my role and do not have deep-seated knowledge or the ability to influence participants who had worked at the school far longer than I had.

Kanuha (2000, p441) suggests an 'emic' standpoint is one which is 'subjective, informed and influential' contrasted with an 'etic' account which is 'objective, distant, logical and the researcher is removed from the project'. 'Emic' accounts are meaningful to participants can be produced in more depth and detail by insider researchers (Trowler, 2011). This research is an example of an emic account as the research is relevant and meaningful to participants in School A and the findings can make contributions to work practice specifically in School A (Nixon, 2008).

Bassey (1999) emphasised the process of research itself makes known something new to the researcher or to the intended audience.

'...a systematic, critical and self critical enquiry which aims to contribute to the advancement of knowledge and wisdom...' (Bassey 1999 p 39)

For the findings of this research to 'make known something new', and have a deeper meaning for practitioners so the findings are taken into consideration when deciding to change practice in School A, then there is an argument that research of this nature may be best carried out by practitioners in the field. This means that are, perhaps, better able to translate the findings into practical solutions for possible future change due to their insider knowledge (Middlewood *et al*, 1999; Vanderlinde and van Braak, 2010; Kempster and Parry, 2011). As I am familiar with the culture in School A it is possible for me to make suggestions, in my conclusions, which are relevant and meaningful to School A as I am able to relate the theory with the practice in School A more effectively as an insider researcher.

'Ethics has to do with the application of moral principles to prevent harming or wronging others, to promote the good, to be respectful and to be fair'. (Sieber, 1993, p14).

Ethics refers to a code of professional conduct where the researcher anticipates, acknowledges and gives consideration to dilemmas such as harm, confidentiality and consent (Robson, 2011). Appropriate prior consideration of ethics ensures participant protection whilst obtaining valid and reliable data (Creswell, 2003). The professional codes of practice produced by organisations such as the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011), and major research funding bodies such as ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council), help researchers meet ethical criteria. In this research the BERA guidelines (BERA, 2011) were used to ensure this study met ethical rigour.

Permission had to be obtained from participants and the headteacher before data could be collected. The consent letter containing information for middle and senior leaders (Appendix 1) was critical as evidence of informed consent (Creswell, 2003, Berg and Lune, 2012). The consent form acknowledged that participant rights were considered and protected as much as possible. I acknowledged use of documents, such as minutes of meetings and the job description for middle leaders, which were originally introduced and intended for a different purpose. Although it should be recognised I may not have had full access to documents or observations, such as senior leadership team meeting minutes, due to my position in the organisation (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007). Retrospective consent (Appendix 2) was obtained from the participants, as the evidence seen in observations did not always consistently match what participants were saying when interviewed.

Briggs and Coleman (2007) claim in order to give consent participants need to understand the purpose of the research, how it would be carried out, and how the outcomes will be used in order for participants to be able to give informed consent. The purpose of the study was made clear in the consent letter in a clear manner and clarified to participants at the time the letter was given out and procedures were explained so participants were aware of what to expect during the research. They were fully aware that they had the right to ask questions and have their privacy protected but it was also important participants were aware that they had the right to withdraw at any point without feeling coerced (BERA, 2011; Plowright, 2011). There was no perceived risk to participants of being involved in this research, it was explained it is optional and any participant may withdraw if they so

choose to do so, at any point during the study, without having to provide a reason and aware that their data would be destroyed in full on this withdrawal. Signatures on the consent letter by both the researcher and the individual participant were the formal agreement to these provisions.

Prior to data collection, formal permission needed to be obtained from the headteacher to conduct the research in School A and this was done verbally via a meeting. I was available to address any questions or concerns before the research commencing. One aspect raised by the headteacher was the intended outcomes and particularly where and how these would be communicated outside of the school (Munhall, 2012). I clarified that the findings will be used for publication in journals and the thesis would be accessible via University libraries. It was confirmed that anonymous quotes were going to be used in the data analysis. It was ethical to clarify this before interviews were carried out and findings written up.

Sufficient time was provided before interviewing to allow the opportunity for questions, participants were made aware they did not have to answer all the questions and could choose to stop at any point (King, 1996). As the interviews were in person, it was possible to see if participants were distressed and move the discussion on or to stop as appropriate and necessary. This was less damaging than gathering information through surveys or questionnaires where explanations cannot be offered to reassure the participant.

Power relations are important as I am working with middle leader colleagues who are my peers, with senior leaders who are my seniors, and above me in the school hierarchy. None of the participants were my subordinates, although the headteacher and the senior leaders did have power over me in terms of my job role and the headteacher in terms of my employment. I was not in a position of real power or influence over middle or senior leaders other than to contribute as a colleague in meetings (Smyth and Holian, 2008). Participants knew that I was researching decision making in the school but not in enough detail to bias or influence the study in any great way.

As Jarvis (1999) points out when people carry out research in their own settings with an aim to improve practice, there may be some ethical issues which arise from being an insider researcher and these have be addressed. I have to consider, for validity and reliability, whether my participants behaved differently when they were being observed or whether they gave answers that they thought I wanted to hear during the interviews.

Polyani (1967) defines knowledge as being 'we can know more than we can tell' (Polyani, 1967, p 4). This means that we can express explicit knowledge (Polyani, 1959) in a way that we can see visually and of which we are consciously aware, such as numbers, diagrams and symbols. Polyani (1959) also argues that there is a second type of knowledge in addition to explicit knowledge called tacit knowledge. People are not consciously aware it may exist, such as concepts and sensory information used to make sense of a situation (Sternberg *et al*, 1993; Peet, 2012). Occasionally, this was to be the case with some of the senior leadership participants, who behaved according to their tacit knowledge and this is explored further in the analysis chapter. Eraut (2000) further added to the theory of tacit knowledge by defining knowledge as either 'codified' or 'personal' (Eraut 2000, p114). Codified knowledge is explicit knowledge that the person is aware of and can identify that helps them to get the job done. Personal knowledge is much more tacit being the skills, competences, and capability people bring to a job but which is not explicit but which helps them to get the job done. In this study, a lot of personal knowledge would have been used within the interactions between middle and senior leaders to answer the 'why' part of the research question. This personal and tacit knowledge could only be obtained through talking to participants and asking them to bring it to forefront through questioning and conversation. It is important to note that tacit knowledge can be speculative and based on the researchers tentative interpretation going beyond the data as tacit knowledge can only truly be known to the participant.

I had to consider whether I had tacit knowledge that may have caused me to make incorrect observations and misconceptions Internal politics and individual loyalties can lead to misrepresentation and subconscious distortion of data, however, there is another argument that as my participants knew me this may have increased data validity. It can be argued that they were more comfortable with providing me with detailed information to explore what was happening in School A as it was possible for me to check the authentication of information. Participants could not give me distorted information they thought I wanted to hear as I would hear and see things, such as meetings where decision making took place, which would conflict with their interview data. However, participants may have not been as open if they were concerned about how the information was going to be used and whether it would be shared with other colleagues. They may have felt they had more of a stronger responsibility to provide me with correct data as my working relationship would still, continue with them after the research project was finished as opposed to not seeing the outsider researcher again once the data had been collected. All

research is subjective and relies on participant honesty so all it is possible to do as a researcher is minimise potential bias. As Foster (1994) says:-

'Research conducted by insiders cannot capture the total experience of an entire community, but neither can research conducted by outsider. No one commands the power to know all things'. (Foster 1994, p144).

Internal politics may have meant some participants revealed information that they thought was acceptable rather than what they actually wanted to share. There was the potential for the research to affect my career if it was negative or portrayed School A in a poor light. The findings were shared with the headteacher and no objections were raised to reporting any of the five issues found. A final copy of the analysis chapter was provided to the headteacher and this was accepted with no concerns raised. I am not reporting anything which is new to School A or anything they are not actively working on at the moment in terms of developing middle leader involvement in school decision making so I was aware that my topic was not going to cause issues. I was exploring an issue senior leaders had already acknowledged quite openly that this was something they wanted to work on. This topic was included on the school development plan in a bid to improve leadership at all levels so participants welcomed this research.

However, I did feel middle leaders were being quite open and senior leaders preferred to speak in a positive light about decision making in School A. There is a power issue that some participants may conceal some information to try and influence the outcomes of the research (Munro *et al*, 2004), however, Mercer (2007) argues power relations tend to exist more if people in more powerful roles are researching those below them in the hierarchy. In response to Munro *et al's* (2004) concerns, throughout the research process, I did not feel threatened by senior leaders or constrained in any way. I did not feel that there was any attempt to manipulate the findings either by senior or middle leaders. All the responses appeared genuine although at a senior leadership team level there may have been a lower level of frankness and openness, as they may not wish to share certain information outside of the senior leadership team.

This research was not a main priority in School A and most of my colleagues viewed it as a non-school funded project that I was working on outside of school time for my doctoral studies. I feel if the school had funded the research, or I had been asked to carry out the research specifically by the school, there would have been much more scope for bias and invalid results, as the school would have had an agenda about what was reported. This was

not the case senior leaders did not coerce anyone to take part and none of the participants requested the results other than the headteacher. It was not of relevance to me which individual participants took part; the only criterion was that they were employed either in a middle or a senior leader role in School A and that they fully consented to taking part.

Confidentiality is removing elements that might identify participants and anonymity is where the subjects remain nameless (Berg and Lune, 2012). In this study, participant identity will be protected when writing up through the use of pseudonyms (BERA, 2011; Trowler, 2011) and interview transcripts will not be shared with anyone except The Open University so participants were aware of where their data was being held and who it would be shared with (BERA, 2011). Opie and Sikes (2004) argue it is difficult to keep anonymity in small-scale research as participants may recognise colleagues from quotes (Bassey, 1999; Creswell, 2003). It is correct that some of the participants may be able to identify themselves from quotes but it is very unlikely they would want to access the thesis and do so.

It is important from an ethical viewpoint to allow participants a considered opportunity to read, and re-read, a draft transcript of their interview as produced by the researcher, comment on it and change it if they so wish to (Bassey, 1999). This is to ensure that all the information included in the transcript is acceptable to the participant. Patton (1990) refers to this as a sign of 'reciprocity' and acknowledges to each participant that their information is of value and worth. Patti Lather (1986) refers to 'research rape', where the researcher goes into the research site, they take the required data and the participants are subsequently ignored and I wanted to avoid this. Despite offering interview transcripts to participants several times, none of my participants wished to verify them, check for misconceptions or have a personal copy. I had to trust that they were happy with how I had interpreted their interviews. I would have permitted changes if they so wished to ensure that they were entirely happy the data was an accurate reflection of their perceptions before analysis took place.

Interviews

Interviewing is a popular technique data collection in social research (Holstein and Gubrium, 2002; Riach, 2009). The main advantages and drawbacks of using semi-structured in interviews are highlighted in the table I have devised as follows:-

Advantages of interviewing for this study.	Drawbacks of interviewing for this study.
Transcripts can be reviewed and revisited to provide data as themes and concepts continue to emerge.	Interviewing is time consuming in terms of actual interviews, transcription, and analysis of data.
Evidence in the transcripts can be used in writing up process.	Typing transcriptions can be time consuming.
Interview data can be explored in my own time, in my own environment, as opposed to observations that have to occur 'live' at the time they take place.	Interviewing is not a preferred method of sharing knowledge and information by participants. Some people feel they have to say 'what is expected of them'
Interviews can provide new perspectives that can be immediately developed and explored to take the research into new directions.	The Dictaphone intimidated participants and they shared 'appropriate' thoughts and comments with me. As soon as the dictaphone was turned off, they started to share their 'real' thoughts they did not want to be part of the audio. Some participants were speaking on and off the record.
It provides depth of interview data so that themes can be probed and investigated.	Interviewer effect as some people may be playing up to fact they are being interviewed and saying what they think I want to hear. One drawback is the

	data is based on participant thoughts and not what they may actually do in practice.
It allows researcher an opportunity to engage with the contents of the data from early stage.	

Table 2 - Advantages and disadvantages of semi-structured interviews

One to one interviews were chosen over focus groups to allow for confidentiality. This meant it was possible to easily transcribe and link specific ideas to individuals as opposed to many different voices within a focus group. I felt participants were more likely to speak their thoughts when alone with the researcher. It was not possible to control a focus group as power may shift to the most vocal participant and there was evidence of this in observed curriculum leader meetings where the most vocal senior and middle leaders tended to dominate

A number of decisions were made as to whether the interviews were to be casual or structured and the types of questions I wished to ask (Brenner, 2006). I wished participants to ‘elaborate on points of interest’ (Denscombe, 2010) and tell me their story as opposed to going through a list of pre-determined questions. Structured interviews were rejected as they make the interview almost representative of a questionnaire administered in a verbal format. A sequence of semi-structured interview questions was devised to allow some structure but also to allow key themes to naturally emerge during interviews (Appendix 3). Brenner (2006, p362) claims ‘a semi structured protocol has the advantage of asking all participants the same core questions with freedom to ask follow-up questions build on responses received’ and this was important in this research to follow up any themes which emerged that appeared to be of importance to the participants. A relaxed approach was used to allow participants to answer in their own time to ensure validity with mainly open questions to allow participants to respond in their own preferred way.

The first few questions were used as ‘grand tour questions’ (Brenner, 2006) where the participant was asked general questions to put them at ease. It was acknowledged that most participants may not have been interviewed for research purposes previously and were looking to me to set the tone and formality of language, depth of answer required and the amount of detail that was required during the first few questions that I asked. Once they

had settled into the interview process, I then used funnel questions where a general question was probed further to try and illicit more detail about a particular participant thought or phenomenon (Brenner, 2006). 'How' and 'why' questions were particularly used to obtain participant perspectives about whole school decision-making in School A as opposed to knowledge about specific decision making structures.

I wanted to have a conversation, rather than an interview with the participants and these questions allowed me to keep the focus on my research theme. This was the same for the senior leader interviews. I wanted them to talk to them about their thoughts and perceptions around key issues in School A around decision making and probed and questioned things they were saying to me, to either agree with middle leader data or refute it. There was no formal interview schedule for senior leaders although I did have the questions I had devised before the interview to keep the discussion focused and on topic but this was made relevant to senior leaders as opposed to the middle leaders.

Alcoff (1991) asks the question whether it is indeed possible to adequately speak for others and try to translate private thoughts in people's heads through language. There is an argument that these are private thoughts that only the speaker can really access (Marino, 2005). There is a difference between speaking for others and speaking on behalf of others. The researcher cannot truly know what is within the mind of the participant and can only use language to attempt to convey this as best they can on behalf of the participant. Marino (2005) suggests a researcher can only truly speak for others where the group concerned is one they are a member of to allow for validity.

Semi structured interviewing allowed a dialogue to form within the topic area (Berg and Lune, 2012) with middle and senior leaders Babbie (2013) claims interviews are not like normal conversations. In a participant interview situation the interviewer tries to present themselves with a low grasp of the participants' situation which is challenging as an inside researcher. A dictaphone recording was taken of each interview to maintain a complete verbal record so I could concentrate on keeping the discussion going rather than recording what participants were saying. Not all participants were happy or comfortable talking with the dictaphone turned on (Brenner, 2006) and I found some of the most important pieces of information came once the tape recorder was turned off and these had to be recorded off the record. The interviews were all transcribed despite Glaser (1992) claiming this is not always relevant but it was not sensible to use handwritten notes during the interview or based on memory afterwards and risk overlooking something which could be vital to linking concepts together later on in the analysis process. A short sample of a transcribed

interview is included in Appendix 4 for validity and credibility reasons. A full interview was not included in the appendix as this may compromise confidentiality and anonymity of participants. Transcription added further strength to the findings because as concepts were 'grounded' in the data, when more data emerged it was possible to revisit the original transcriptions and look for things that may have been missed the first time. When writing up the analysis section, I will refer to some quotes more than once to illustrate or exemplify different points within the data but will avoid this duplication where possible.

The interviews were time consuming to carry out and then time was needed to analyse the data generated (Costley *et al*, 2010). It was important to be aware of the interviewer effect (Plowright, 2011) and acknowledge that interviews are based around what people say and not what they do in practice hence triangulation using documentary analysis and observation. Partial knowledge, terminology mistakes and telling the researcher what they want to hear is why triangulation is important (Sikes, 2009). It is difficult to identify what is true as people's perceptions and memory vary.

Observation

With participant permission, (Appendix 1 and 2) I observed all the curriculum leader meetings I was present at to see how the middle leadership forum helped with taking part in school decision-making. There was no official observation schedule other than to observe meetings and what was happening in School A on a day to day basis within the school culture, for example, work room behaviour and how many times the staffroom was used. What I was looking for was whether the interview data (perceptions) corroborated with what was being observed (practice) during meetings. This meant the interview data could be compared to the observation data in order to triangulate findings. I found I had to go back to the participants and obtain permission retrospectively to use this information (Appendix 2) and it would not have been included if the participants or the headteacher were unhappy with this. In some meetings, I did not take part as a colleague and observed what was happening in detail. I made short notes during the meetings and then recorded these as memos alongside my interview transcripts. I was checking to see if the observations agreed with or refuted what participants were saying in the interviews.

Observation is a good method to collect a large amount of primary evidence in a short amount of time (Denscombe, 2010). It is reliable as two researchers observing are likely to record similar information although they may interpret it differently in their analysis. Observations are not reflections from memory as it is happening live for the observer to

see and record what they have decided is important from the events they are seeing (Babbie, 2013). Observation is a record of participant behaviour and it does not come with their particular explanation of things are the way they are. In this study, this has been addressed through triangulation as the interview data can be used to question the actions observed.

Webb *et al* (1966) highlight two issues when observing, the first is that the observer may be selectively biased against which information they collect. The second is familiarity with the research setting may mean they miss something that may be of consequence to the research. In this study, the main concepts have emerged from the interview transcripts with observations used as a triangulation tool to either support or question the participants' perceptions.

It has been argued as to whether an observer ever really fades into the background (Denscombe, 2010) in the field. There is some element of acting by the participants when they are consciously aware they are being observed (Webb *et al*, 1966). As a lone researcher, I was restricted in terms of when I could observe meetings, as I was also a part of the meetings as a colleague. The observation notes had to be taken alongside being a colleague who was participating in the meeting so it was not always possible to observe everything as fully as I would have liked.

Documentary Analysis

Documents can be supporting evidence for other sources of data, for example, the job description, minutes of meetings and other documents given to middle leaders in terms of whole school decision-making provided an historical account in which to locate my own research and to further triangulate data from the interviews and the observations (Yin, 2008; Babbie, 2013). I feel this additional dimension added greater validity and reliability as both participant thoughts (interview data) and actions (observation data) were taken into account but documentary evidence provided a snapshot of what was happening in decision making over time in School A.

Documentary data was cost effective as it was accessible to me as a middle leader and special permission was not required to access it although permission was asked of the headteacher to use it for research purposes. This data can be independently accessed and checked by others (Denscombe, 2010) unlike the interview and observation data.

One criticism of documentary data is that it is not written for research purposes but for an entirely different purpose. The minutes of meetings were a 'selective' record, as decided by the assistant headteacher, of what was said in a specific meeting, as opposed to a 'full' account of what took place in the meeting. I used this documentary evidence to supplement data from interviews and observations to supplement and triangulate my own data (Babbie, 2013). There is a limit to what exists in the form of documentary evidence, what is accessible to the research and most of it may not be entirely relevant, as it has not been produced specifically for research purposes.

Description of the Research Journey

The research questions below aimed to explore tacit knowledge and behaviour that was personal to the participants so grounded theory was the chosen as the best method to elicit this information.

What does whole school decision-making currently look like in School A?

- 1) What is the middle leader perspective on this?
- 2) What is the senior leader perspective on this?
- 3) What are the ways in which middle and senior leaders can develop existing practice to move collaborative whole school decision-making forward?

Two overarching themes of organisational culture and relationships emerged from the data. Five smaller sub themes, which were underpinned by relationships and organisational culture, also emerged to help answer the research questions were balkanization, collaboration, capacity building, job role and hierarchy. Interview data was gathered from a sample of middle leaders and open coding took place. Line-by-line coding of the transcripts and frequent memoing allowed me to discover the concepts important to the participants to explain what was happening. These concepts and codes were then compared with the rest of the rest of interviews, which were gradually carried out, and more sub-concepts began to emerge. Once the key categories had emerged, coding took place with the interviews to add to or refute the categories had already emerged. This is how the overarching categories and underpinning sub categories emerged from the data. I remained open to new categories emerging, as data was added over time, and was not looking only for what had already emerged. The documentary analysis and observation data was added to triangulate the findings.

Constant comparisons and memoing was a strong part of the study to ensure that the concepts and ideas were grounded within the data. The next stage was theoretical coding

where the categories were sorted, memoing was cross-referenced with existing empirical studies to agree with or refute my data. The theory emerged from the main concepts and sub concepts as to what was happening in school A in terms of middle and senior leader working relationships from the perspective of whole school decision making. I acknowledged potential sources of bias that may have influenced my study to ensure accuracy and credibility (Glaser, 1998). It can be challenging as an insider researcher to overcome and disclose all possible forms of prior knowledge and experiences about School A, I have attempted to account for this during the research process in order to highlight where objectivity may be at risk.

One of the main issues was dealing with a potential Hawthorne effect where participants may have been behaving in a certain manner during observation (Coombs and Smith, 2003) and the potential impact of this on the findings. This was particularly noticeable when I interviewed the senior leaders in School A as they are more likely to give junior members of staff the 'official' version of policy and practice hence the threat to validity. It did feel at times that they may be telling me what they wanted me to hear, to be seen to be supportive of the national agenda of ensuring leadership in schools was collaborative. Senior leaders were keen to express how they shared leadership and how middle leaders had many opportunities to share leadership with them. Stories of what they believed were examples of collaborative leadership were discussed very positively. They believed that it was gradually being embedded within the culture and way of life in School A. An example of this is discussed in the analysis chapter where one assistant head talks about discussing the role of the teaching assistant in School A and he explains that he did share this leadership with middle leaders rather than simply telling them what he wanted them to do. This example had the potential to bias the research and make it unreliable but I overcame this to make the data more robust through collecting observation and documentary data alongside what senior leaders were telling me so I could triangulate it. It is the role of the senior leaders, and is naturally to be expected, that they will present their school and ways of working in a positive light as this is a reflection of their leadership but this raises concerns it may have potentially biased some of the senior leader interview data.

In relation to bias due to prior knowledge, I could not explain beforehand why middle and senior leaders behaved in the manner they did when working together as these were their private thoughts and perceptions. This was only really illuminated through memoing when the interview data was analysed and the concepts began to emerge. It was through linking these concepts together that the participant perceptions and reasons behind them began to emerge.

Initially the data collection was aimed at middle leaders, as it was their perceptions I was most interested in about what they thought about sharing whole school decision making with senior leaders. My initial questions were based around exploring how middle leaders and senior leaders worked together, how they personally perceived this relationship and what it was like in reality working with each other in School A to make these decisions. It was not possible to have second-guessed or read any literature around these concepts before analysing the data or collecting it, as I had no real awareness of what was important to the participants at this early stage.

Participants were not chosen in terms of background or length of service. They were chosen because they wished to take part. I felt I was more able to get cooperation and honesty from people who genuinely wished to be a part of the research as opposed to those who had been forced to take part. There was no coercion to be a part of the research at all. Some participants wished to take part but then later withdrew due to workload and time constraints so the sample became smaller than originally planned.

Interviews were held in a similar fashion with all participants over the same year. These were a matter of months apart from each other and no major incidents, such as an Ofsted inspection or a change in senior leadership, happened during this time that could have influenced interviews earlier in the study from the ones later on. The interviews were conversations based about perceptions and lasted between 60 minutes and 90 minutes and all were transcribed. The data was all coded and analysed and sections were used to illustrate points during analysis in the thesis. A digital recording of each interview was made to allow for transcription and analysis later on. This was so I could focus on prompting and listening to participants and understanding what they were saying about their perceptions and experiences rather than trying to record their answers by hand and listen at the same time.

Grounded theory provided a means to discover what was important to the middle and senior leader participants in School A and allowed me to make a start with the study and data collection. Over time, as the data was collected, the categories and themes emerged and became saturated and I was able to focus the study more at this point. The research was logical and progressed over time with data being added to strengthen the emerging theory. Literature was added in as the categories become saturated and no new information was being gleaned from the data gathered. The literature informed the study once the data had been collected and analysed to compare and locate my research within existing theories and concepts. Grounded theory provided a means to follow a process as suggested

by Glaser (1998) and enabled me to build a theory as opposed to testing an existing theory as with other qualitative methods.

I followed Glaser's (1998) suggested three methods of coding, open coding, selective coding and theoretical coding. Open coding was when the raw data transcripts were coded into very general themes through line-by-line coding. At this stage, all the transcripts were coded because it was not possible to identify which data was important and which were not at this stage. These open codes were grouped together to begin to create categories and the data was examined for potential themes and patterns and compared against other interviews to find similarities and differences. As the categories began to saturate, the two main prominent categories, which were working relationships and school culture, started to emerge as being the most important to the participants. This process then leads to explaining what is happening and creating the grounded theory. I was looking for similar and dissimilar data amongst interview transcripts and whether the categories emerging were similar to the ones in previous interviews and for new categories. Memoing is a key part of grounded theory where the researcher constantly records their own thoughts and ideas about the data. This was done throughout the data collection and analysis phase. As the categories emerged it was necessary to start reflecting on what was emerging. I commented on similarities and differences. The data collected contributed continually to the theory being developed in terms of fit and relevance (Glaser, 1998). In interviewing all available participants I was able to ensure the data was saturated as much as it could be and all the categories I was able to realistically collect were explored and developed as much as they could be within the constraints of the study.

Relationships and organisational culture were the categories most represented the participants concerns and linked all the sub categories together. Selective coding is where passages in the interview transcripts were selected for relevance to add to or refute the existing categories had already emerged from the middle leader interviews. For School A, it was the issue of relationships and 'how we do things here' regarding organisational culture that appeared to be at the heart of middle and senior leader working relationships. These two themes seemed to be the most important to the topic I was studying so, during the process of selective coding, I went through the transcripts again but this time chose the data that best illustrated my points.

Theoretical coding is when all the categories have been saturated and there was no more new data from the participants. The open coding splits and separates the data but theoretical coding joins it together to conceptualise the relationships between the different

sections. This part of the research ensured that the data was analysed from the viewpoint of the participants. The two main categories that emerged were working relationships and school culture. The remaining five concepts of balkanization; job roles; hierarchy; collaboration, and capacity building were the sub concepts that underpinned these two main concepts. Relationships and organisational culture were the two main driving factors behind these five sub-categories. Carrying out the analysis in this manner meant I was consistent and my analysis and findings were really related to the data and these categories could all be traced firmly to the data. The grounded theory for my study was then deduced from the core categories in this research was the one that was the most saturated and the one that appeared to be of most concern to the middle and senior participants in my study. In the analysis chapter, I will explore and link them to the existing literature.

I enjoyed the experience of the research and concluded the research project with some suggestions of how School A could move forward in terms of building better working relationships between middle and senior leaders. These suggestions were grounded within the evidence from the two main concepts and the five sub-concepts that emerged from the data as important to the participants from the data. I concluded that distributed leadership, which is much mentioned currently by senior leaders as embedded and occurring, is not yet present in School A and that this is something for the middle and senior leaders to build on for the future.

Overall, this chapter has considered the methodological considerations taken into account for this study and explained why the methodology is suited to this particular study. I have justified why interviewing, observations and documentary analysis were most appropriate data collection methods to illuminate how whole school decision-making takes place in School A.

Chapter 3 will explore the literature that is relevant to this study.

Chapter 3 - Literature Review

This chapter will explore the literature and the current thinking, related to the themes that emerged from the data. The concepts explored in the literature review are school culture; relationships; job role; balkanisation; collaboration and collegiality; hierarchy; and capacity building.

School Culture

Culture is a challenging concept to define (Stoll and Fink, 1996; Prosser, 1999; Deal and Peterson, 1999; Bush and Bell, 2002; Schein, 2010; Alvesson, 2011). We can observe organisational culture through how day-to-day business is carried out. Culture is the creation of meaning through which we interpret our experiences and actions (Geertz, 1973). Culture has been referred to as a social glue which holds the organization together (Schein, 1985; Deal and Peterson, 1999) but is also encompasses smaller subcultures (Prosser, 1999) Culture is formed from unconscious beliefs and values and this makes it hard to understand and, for leaders, to try and change (Prosser, 1991).

Schein (2010) defines culture as a product of experiences of a group of people.

'The culture of a group can now be defined as a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems' (Schein, 2010, p18)

Culture can be defined on three levels; 'artefacts', 'beliefs and values' and 'underlying assumptions' (Schein, 2010). Artefacts are observable behaviour that can be felt, seen and heard by those unfamiliar with the culture. Care has to be taken when analysing and making assumptions at an artefact level because observations may mean different things to different people. For example, a 'loose structure' can be interpreted as inefficient to someone who likes structured hierarchy but a positive factor for someone who prefers things to be less prescriptive (Schein, 2010). One way to understand artefacts is through talking to people who work within the organisational culture by asking them about day-to-day things that guide their behaviour such as the physical environment, language, technology, clothes, stories told, mission statements and rituals and ceremonies. We interpret artefacts based on our own underlying assumptions and it can be difficult to try to describe participant beliefs about artefacts because artefacts remain in their heads as their private thoughts.

The next layer to Schein's (2010) theory is beliefs and values which are individual assumptions about what is right and wrong, what will work or not work within the organisation. These beliefs and values are important as they guide participants in School A as to how to deal with things. When there is a disparity between values and beliefs and the way things are done in School A then we start to see a difference in what we observe and desired behaviour. This is discussed further in the findings chapter where the senior leaders talked about middle leaders collaborating but this was not consistent with what was observed in practice. Not all beliefs and values become assumptions adopted by all the people who work in an organisation but just the ones that are perceived by them to work. If the staff can be convinced to act positively on this belief it then moves to the next level to become an assumption. Assumptions become taken for granted as tacit knowledge which tells group members how to perceive, think and feel about things. They are un-debatable and very difficult to alter as they have become deeply embedded as part of the organisational culture, for example, the headteacher always chairs middle leaders forum meeting. Questioning these assumptions, such as asking middle leaders to do chair this meeting on a rota basis instead, releases anxiety and defensiveness which causes challenges when trying to alter the assumption.

Schein (2010) argues it is necessary to understand assumptions first as these are the essence and then you can start to make sense of the values and artefacts. It is hard to study culture as we can observe the surface (Stoll and Fink, 1996) but culture does not develop overnight and is built up over time (Deal and Peterson, 1999). The observable actions are shaped, transformed, nurtured to reinforce the eventual underlying values, beliefs, and assumptions that form the culture.

Culture should be considered before any change or innovation is introduced as changing culture when leaders themselves do not understand it is a recipe for failure, therefore, changing culture is a time consuming, difficult and anxiety provoking thing for leaders (Prosser, 1999). It is the senior leaders role to mould and alter the culture of their schools but it is not easy as culture is a powerful entity (Turner, 1996). Genuine improvement will come from within a school through its the complex web of values, beliefs, norms, social and power relations (Prosser, 1999).

Culture is believed to contain mental elements such as beliefs, attitudes, and values and behaviour elements such as practices, routines, habits, ceremonies and rituals. Changing mental aspects is believed to be the way to change the culture (Prosser, 1999). Staff may be persuaded to let go of beliefs and attitudes but values are much harder to change. People

adjust their values and beliefs alongside their behaviour and this is what plants the seeds to change culture (Prosser, 1999). Most school cultures are resistant to change and this is why senior leaders tend to fit in around the existing culture (Barth, 2007). Where leaders ignore this and promote strategies incompatible with the existing culture, they face micro politics, conflict, and weak implementation. In practice, many leaders operate in a 'myopia' and limit options, whether consciously or subconsciously, to those which are likely to be consistent with the existing culture (Bush, 1998). They believe that tolerance and compatibility is preferable to trying to weed out different subcultures (Bush, 1998).

Subcultures are what each department have defined individually to make them different from other departments in the school and it has been argued that culture is simply the aggregation of many subcultures (Huberman, 1992; McLaughlin and Talbert, 2007). Therefore, school leaders can promote an overall ethos in their schools but also recognise that different subcultures may enrich the school. These multiple subcultures are likely to exist in larger schools and universities and are what Hargreaves (1994) refers to as balkanised culture.

The structure of an organisation can be defined as how the staff and work are divided and co-ordinated. If schools are to become successful communities then they need to build structures that support interrelationships and interconnections to develop a school culture that promote collegiality (Hargreaves, 1994). It may be possible to use organisational structures to try to change the culture that can be changed swiftly by leaders in the school. The organisational culture, which underpins the structures, can only be changed indirectly over a longer time period (Hopkins, 2007). Attempting to simply change the organisational structures will lead to superficial changes that will not be embedded as the cultural values that led to that structure need to be understood and accepted (Stoll and Fink, 1996).

Relationships 'Leader – Member Exchange' Theory

Leader member exchange theory advocates believe that leadership is the interaction between leaders and their subordinates and was first developed by Dansereau, Graen, and Haga in 1975 (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995; Uhl-Bien, 2006; Schyns and Day, 2010; Dulebohn *et al*, 2011; Sheer, 2014). The focus of this theory argues if effective working relationships can be built between middle and senior leaders then will bring benefits (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995). The other relationship theories I explored were more concerned with behaviour as opposed to interaction between the subordinates and leaders. For example, path-goal theory (House, 1971) considers leader behaviour when exploring the performance of subordinates. This was not a useful theory to this study as it would only

account for senior leaders' actions and behaviour in working to meet the objectives and goals of School A. House (1996) argues senior leaders compensate for subordinate behaviour, complement them in their strong abilities and compensate for any perceived deficiencies. This theory was not chosen, as it does not explore the interaction between the middle and senior leaders. This theory would have been more suitable if exploring the impact of senior leader actions on the behaviour of middle leaders in School A.

The second theory consulted was Fiedler's (1971) contingency model which focused on senior leader effectiveness and this is not relevant to my research question which is exploring the quality of exchange and interaction between middle and senior leaders in School A. This theory focuses on the style of leadership being changed to fit the situation. Task orientated leadership is transactional with lots of task structure and high leader power over subordinates. Relationship based leadership, is where there is a strong working relationship between middle and senior leaders and subordinates organise their own agreed work tasks with minimal leadership power from senior leaders. Again, this theory focused on the actions of the senior leaders and explores the impact on subordinates and this was not the focus of this study. Leader member exchange theory was the one which most resonated with this study. This is why it was chosen as the framework to explore participant relationships in School A.

Shreisheim *et al* (1999) reported that the 'exchange' between leaders and subordinates was often investigated primarily from one side and not as an equal exchange between leaders and members, it is the quality of exchange that interests researchers (Sin *et al*, 2009; Schyns and Day, 2010; Sheer, 2014). Leader member exchange theory proposes that differences exist between individual leaders and followers (Schyns and Day, 2010). Early studies of leader member exchange theory focused mainly on individual vertical links between leaders and followers and the unique relationships that were formed with each subordinate. Early studies by Dansereau, Graen and Haga (1975), Graen and Cashman (1975) and Graen (1976) found some senior leaders formed in-group and out-group with subordinates. The in-group had stronger working relationships with senior leaders and they negotiated their role responsibilities via mutual respect and understanding. These middle leaders had access to more information, were deemed more dependable, and were involved and more communicative compared to those in the out-group (Northouse, 2013). They acted more like assistants to the senior leaders (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995). The out-group had very formal relationships with senior leaders that were closely linked to their job description and revolved around the formal hierarchy. These middle leaders appeared to be less compatible with the leader and usually came in to do their jobs as hired hands (Graen and

Uhl-Bien, 1995; Northouse, 2013). Whether the leader operated an in-group and/or out-group relationship with their followers was determined through how well the leader interacted with their followers and whether their followers performed any activities beyond their formal job description.

Lunenburg (2010) argues the leader initiates whether a follower is part of the in-group or the out-group and that this is not a random occurrence. Once these groups are formed they tend to remain stable (Graen and Cashman, 1975). Followers displaying high levels of self-efficacy are likely to be in the in-group (Murphy and Ensher, 1999; Chen *et al*, 2007 and leaders may perceive these followers as more competent (Eden 1992). High quality exchanges result in less employee turnover, greater commitment, attitudes, and participation (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995; Iles *et al*, 2007; Schyns and Day, 2010). High quality leader member exchanges have been linked to feelings of high energy in employees (Atwater and Carmelli, 2009) and may compensate for lack of empowerment (Harris *et al*, 2003).

Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) emphasise leaders should aim to cultivate high-quality exchanges with all subordinates rather than some of them. Some theorists have proposed that this develops over time and if the quality of interactions increases then the quality of the relationship should improve (Graen and Scandura, 1987; Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995; Sin *et al*, 2009). There are concerns how many good quality relationships a senior leaders can realistically be expected to develop based on the limited time and resources to do their job (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995; Sheer, 2014).

Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) propose there are three phases of leadership making which develop over time.

Phase one – Stranger.

The interactions are based purely on contractual relationships within a prescribed organisational role with low quality exchanges. Followers are focused on themselves and the leader displays managerial behaviour with an emphasis on hierarchy.

Phase two – Acquaintance.

There is a more involved relationship between the leader and follower. It begins when the leader assesses whether they are willing to provide any new challenges or whether a subordinate is interested in taking on a new role. Hierarchy is not emphasised and there appears to be less of a focus on self-interest. There is more emphasis on the quality of

exchange, which develops and improves over time as greater trust and respect develops between the leaders.

Phase three – Mature Partnership

This is where leaders and followers have developed an optimum working relationship. Leaders can count on their followers to do additional work beyond their job role. There are high quality exchanges between them and a much higher degree of mutual trust and respect towards each other. The more quality interactions the better the relationship (Sin et al, 2009; Schyns and Day, 2010).

In theory, it should be the same between leader and follower but this is not the case (Glibrowski *et al*, 2007; Sin *et al*, 2009; Schyns and Day, 2010). Some studies have tried to measure the relationship quality between leaders and followers (Sheer, 2014). Much of this research focuses on the followers' perspective as opposed to leaders and followers collectively (Gerstner and Day, 1997; Schyns and Day, 2010). Sin *et al* (2009) found there were differences between follower leader perceptions of the same relationship and that there was more response inflation from leaders. This may be because the senior leaders see the quality of the relationship as a reflection of themselves personally rather than of the working relationship with their follower so they inflate the quality. There is evidence of less conflict within high quality exchanges (Paglis and Green, 2002). Basik and Martinko (2008) found the more agreement between leaders and followers about the quality of their working relationship the less conflict between them. However, is a challenge to measure leader member exchanges and although this has been attempted there have been much variation between scales and levels of analysis. This means it is challenging to compare studies for content and validity (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995; Schriesheim *et al*, 1999; Northouse, 2013; Sheer, 2014).

Leader member exchange theory enhances job performance through social exchange and self-efficacy (Walumbwa *et al*, (2011). High quality leader member exchange theory encourages the development of a community towards supervisors and when this takes place, the follower will give more effort that may result in higher job performance (Chen *et al*, 2007). The follower is more likely to carry out social exchanges when they are part of the 'in-group' as opposed to the 'out-group' and when they go beyond their role requirement they are engaging in organisational citizenship behaviour. Walumbwa *et al*, (2011) found leaders with high quality leader member exchange behaviour had enhanced commitment from followers. However, a criticism is that leader member exchange theory supports development of discriminatory and unfair privileged groups. There may be a

perception the in-group gets more support, attention or resources to allow them to perform more effectively (Walumbwa *et al*, 2011).

The theory does not expand on how to move between the groups and it is assumed once groups are formed then movement between them does not occur (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995; Dansereau, Graen and Haga, 1975; Sheer, 2014). Leader member exchange theory highlights the importance of communication and how it helps to build effective relationships (Northouse, 2013). Some people will naturally relate to and get along with leaders and followers more effectively than others (Northouse, 2013). This theory does not explain how to build and develop good quality exchanges if they do not already exist (Yukl, 1994; Uhl-Bien *et al*, 2012).

Job Role

Katz and Kahn (1978) use role theory to explain individual behaviour within groups. They defined organisations as consisting of a series of roles with associated behaviours and expectations. The role is considered dependent on others and is defined in relation to position in the hierarchical structure. Biddle (1986, p68) later defined role theory as ‘a triad of concepts: patterned and characteristics social behaviour, parts of identities are assumed by social participants and scripts of expectations for behaviour are understood by all and adhered to by the performer’. Role theory focuses on how people perceive and accept their role and then behave to fulfil that role.

The people depending on the person occupying the role are called the ‘role set’ (Katz and Kahn 1978, p189). Role set expectations are important because their conception of the role compared to the role holder is important. The role set communicate their expectations through overt conversations, job descriptions, through line management or covertly through positive and negative reinforcement (Katz and Kahn, 1978; Schmind and Daniel, 2011). Earlier on, formulating and implementing strategy were two separate leadership tasks allocated to specific roles in the hierarchy (Taylor, 1911; Mintzberg, 1973). Senior leader role was to devise the strategy and middle leaders was to implement it (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1996; Raes *et al*, 2011). Role theory helps us understand the interactions and relationships behind role and why people comply. Leader-member exchange theory is useful as this framework helps to further develop role theory to explore the interactions from middle and senior leader perspectives.

Role compliance can be obtained through job description, performance management, and line management meetings. Therefore, there should be an agreement regarding role expectations and how people interact to fulfil requirements and issues tend to emerge when

there is role disparity or when individual roles change and this is when role dissensus occurs (Katz and Kahn, 1978). There can be two tensions in the role of the subject leaders (Bennett *et al*, 2003). Subject leaders may see themselves as accountable only to their departments whereas senior leaders may view them as being accountable to the whole school and to governors. Bryk and Schneider (2003, p41) define 'relational trust' as 'each party in a relationship maintains an understanding of his or her role's obligations and holds some expectations about the obligations of other parties'. If leaders try to change this role perception then it will result in conflict (Schmind and Daniel, 2011). If role dissensus is removed then collaboration may take place but while role dissensus exists then poor working relationships may develop, therefore, to collaborate and work together the obligations and expectations people have of their roles must agree. Clarity avoids duplication, conflict, and confusion (Arrowsmith, 2004). Behaviour that is different from expectations may show as resistance or evoke conflict (Katz and Kahn, 1978; Schmind and Daniel, 2011) and this may mean that middle leaders have the power to support, reduce, reject or delay initiatives (Raes *et al*, 2011; Klar, 2012).

There still remains a gap within empirical studies that show how senior leadership teams can develop meaningful interactions with middle leaders (Spillane, 2006; Dimmock, 2012) and this study aims to contribute knowledge in this area.

Balkanisation

There is an argument that schools are more organised for tasks as opposed to teamwork and collaboration (Gunter, 2001). Lortie (1975) described the work of teachers as often being isolated within an 'egg-crate structure of schools'. This quote illustrates the point that secondary schools tend to divide people and subjects by compartmentalising them (Day *et al*, 2000; Hammersley-Fletcher, 2005; Poultney, 2007; Harris, 2008; Dimmock, 2012).

Hargreaves (1994) defines balkanization as 'teachers working neither in isolation, nor with most of their colleagues as a whole school, but in smaller sub groups within the school community such as a secondary school department' (Hargreaves 1994, p213). School leaders may limit collaborative working across departments by supporting a hierarchy of leaders as opposed to collegial relations across the hierarchy (Fidler, 2001; Bush, 2002; Bennett *et al*, 2007). Working in subject areas may explain why middle leaders may not feel they have much influence at a whole school level (Adey, 2000). Larger schools tend to have less face-to-face interactions and more bureaucratic relationships across the organisation.

'Relationships in schools are built on personal conversations, frequent dialogue, shared work and shared responsibilities. As individuals interact with each other they tend to listen across boundaries – erected by disciplines, grade levels, expertise, authority, position, race and gender' (Harris and Lambert, 2003, p91).

Balkanized cultures diminishes the value of collaborative activities (Imants and Veen, 2010) and if middle leaders discuss their isolation with their peers and with senior leaders then this may help them to build rapport and trust (Beatty, 2011) and strengthen the leader member exchange quality from stranger to acquaintance.

Hammersley-Fletcher (2005) noted autocratic models of leadership leave leaders feeling isolated. There is a balance between senior leaders feeling they are burdening middle leaders and middle leaders wanting to be involved in wider school life. Adey (2000) noted both middle and senior leaders are important to strategy formulation and implementation but there has been little empirical research into this mutual interaction. Middle and senior leaders rely on each other to create stability when introducing and implementing new initiatives through formulating decisions and detecting how well they have been received and implemented in departments.

The effectiveness of a school cannot be traced to an individual and is usually the sum of relationships and skills of those in the school community (Sergiovanni, 2004). This is all the work that all the people do in the school collectively, as opposed to dependence on a single leader (Harris and Lambert, 2003). In collaborating, conflicting leadership styles, targets, priorities, agendas and timescales can emerge and may mean potential for conflict as those to, whom leadership is shared may have different agendas and this can threaten school improvement initiatives (Bryk and Schneider, 2003). Middle leaders may have different priorities to senior leaders in how to move the school forward. There may be issues around middle leaders needing more time to carry out the initiative and senior leaders requiring faster progress (Storey, 2004; Harris, 2009; Kelchtermans, 2011). Brownell *et al* (2006) found teachers who significantly differed in views were least likely to collaborate with others believing their viewpoint was correct.

Coleman (1998) describes how social capital develops through leaders closing information loops. Closure happens when people have the chance for interaction, create trust and develop reputations around certain practices, for closure to happen, they must go through a process of completing feedback, and interaction loops. If these loops remain open, there will be fewer structured opportunities for closure and trust does not develop because

people have not had a chance to create interactions needed for obligations or commitments (Coleman, 1998). Many school systems operate an open structure, where people rarely get together again to discuss. To create legitimate opportunities for communities to develop there need to be clear feedback loops leaders can develop from feedback, reflect on practice, share and question their own practice and accept suggestions of peers.

Halverson (2007) researched Adams School in Chicago where the headteacher tried to develop a community of practice in order to develop collegiality and attempt to break down balkanization. Halverson (2007) shows how the school improvement plan was a collaborative effort to coordinate activities across the school. This is relevant to this study as senior leaders in School A will need to create opportunities to work together on meaningful tasks. The Adams case suggests professional community is the outcomes of social interactions in the school, for example, the formal setting up of the breakfast club but informal consequences of these routines, the setting up of five weekly assessments because of discussions at the breakfast club. Therefore, he claims we create professional communities when school leaders either shape routines or design new routines to create structures which foster social capital (Halverson, 2007).

I have included some interpretation drawing on the literature about communities of practice in the analysis chapter. For School A to aim for a community of practice is an 'idealised' environment that both middle and senior leaders wish to work towards when they are working collaboratively and in a transformational leadership culture. There was no evidence found of a community of practice operating within the data from School A but I have included but I have included consideration of the concept of the community of practice as this seemed to be what both middle and senior leaders appear to be working towards in School A. This could be a future vision for School A and something they are aiming for so it is relevant to mention it here and in the analysis as they are trying to build the groundwork for it.

Collaboration and Collegiality

Current government policies of implementing a world-class curriculum relies on collaboration of leaders to succeed (Hargreaves, 1994). There have been many efforts to include teachers as part of formal decision making procedures but studies have reported weak implementation (Anderson, 1998; Wahlstrom and Seashore-Lewis, 2008). Much has been written about the importance of teacher collegiality and collaboration but there is still appears to be little agreement on a definition for each concept (Hargreaves, 1994; Harris

and Lambert, 2003; Bennett *et al*, 2007; Devechhi and Rouse, 2010; Kelchtermans, 2011; Jarvis, 2012). There is little agreement about what collaboration and collegiality actually mean and they are used interchangeably (Little, 1990; Hargreaves, 1994; Beatty, 2011; Datnow, 2011; Jarvis, 2012). In this study, collaboration means when teachers work together in their professional lives. The definition of collegiality used is when teachers are working together in the workplace with deeper relationships on a social and emotional level (Jarzabkowski, 2003). Collaboration and collegiality complement one another as collaboration is the work itself whereas collegiality is the leadership of this work, therefore, both concepts are relevant to be explored in this research.

Without collaboration sustained improvement and reform will have little impact (Harris and Lambert, 2003) and collegial relations will help to influence the culture to increase the sense of involvement and ownership and lead to improved practice and greater innovation (Andrews and Lewis, 2002; Zhao *et al*, 2002; Brownell *et al*, 2006). Collaboration requires leaders to support each other, not just with technical knowledge but with personal knowledge which is rooted in relationships (Devechhi and Rouse, 2010). It is important to be clear on the purpose of collaboration within an organisation in order to give it some meaning and relevance (Little, 1990; Garmston and Wellman, 1999; Kelchtermans, 2011).

Copland (2003) found, in a study of eighty-six schools, if there were positive trends in sharing leadership then performance improved in terms of pupil achievement, teachers asking for more support and resources and a greater reliance on to professional community to obtain new ideas and support. In her study of headteachers and subject leaders, There is a desire to encourage collaborative cultures rather than teacher privacy and balkanization (Lieberman *et al*, 2007). Hammersley-Fletcher (2005) noted both groups talked favourably about collaboration and discussion and believed delegated responsibilities were the way forward, however, she indicated headteachers struggled to have the courage to hand over to others when they are accountable. Schools can improve faster when headteachers realise they have a skills base to make the school more productive (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001; Gronn 2003). Sharing leadership means teachers have opportunity to develop their leadership potential and leadership may flounder if key people move on as opposed to capacity building across the school to make leadership sustainable (Dimmock, 2012).

In recent years, despite schools being hierarchical and designed around headteacher accountability, the idea of a single leader has been challenged and there has been a gradual shift to more collaborative practices (Lambert, 2002; Harris and Lambert, 2003; Spillane and Diamond, 2007; Robinson, 2009; Townsend, 2011; Dimmock, 2012). Headteachers

alone do not have the capacity to improve outcomes (Wahlstrom and Seashore Lewis, 2008). Studies suggest headteacher input is critical but leadership does not need to be entirely directed by them (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001; Spillane, 2006). Pearce and Sims (2002) studied shared leadership and found sharing leadership was more positive to implement change than traditional hierarchical models. Pearce *et al* (2004) again found similar findings that shared leadership is stronger than traditional vertical team leadership. These findings indicate that sharing leadership may be more beneficial than single team leaders. However, Johnson (2003) cautions against all forms of collaboration as being good. It is considered dangerous to see collaboration as the solution to all leadership problems (Spillane and Diamond, 2007). Blackmore (1995) views collaboration in schools in a negative light and argues power relations between headteachers and teachers combined with performance management routines cannot encourage genuine collaboration. Further issues are time required (Glover *et al*, 1999; Bush, 2002) and workload (Brown and Rutherford, 1996). Datnow (2011) found time and setting expectations was essential for collaboration to be successful in their case study of schools in the United States. Where headteachers took time to set expectations for meetings, for example, what to bring and not to bring, how to put together data then this ensured accountability to staff and made meetings more purposeful. The culture is created by the headteacher in a school so their actions will create and support collegiality.

Johnson (2003) studied four schools in Australia to promote greater collaboration. He found collaboration did support some teachers but others felt changes increased workload, loss of autonomy and competition for resources, recognition, and power. The benefits of collaboration and collegiality are lower absentee rates, less teacher stress and increased commitment and enthusiasm (Johnson, 2003; Imants and Veen, 2010). School cultures that are more supportive of teacher learning tend to have more of a positive impact on teacher leadership (Mooney-Simmie *et al*, 2012) whereas an unsupportive school culture is resistant to change and can have a negative impact. Leithwood *et al* (2006) suggests the impact of leadership depends largely on how it is shared and highlight two conditions, leadership should be distributed to those who have the skills, knowledge expertise or can develop these and, secondly, that it should be planned and coordinated in some way. It is suggested that unplanned distributed leadership will not help the organisation grow (Harris, 2008). Fleming (2000) describes a collaborative culture in a secondary school. This is not a complete list but it guides us towards one example of what this may look like.

‘In schools where a collaborative culture exists there is a clear and shared vision about the values and purposes of the school and this vision is regularly reviewed

and examined. Teachers' voices' are strong, disagreements are visible, and teachers are both empowered and accountable. Team teaching and joint planning are common, teachers are willing to be learners, and there is an on-going commitment to professional development. Teams work effectively and there is a high level of trust and openness. Hierarchies are not so obvious and banter; jokes and celebrations reflect mutual understanding and respect' (Fleming 2000, p35).

Hargreaves (1994, p192-193) defines a collaborative culture as having the following characteristics:-

- Spontaneous – relationships evolve and sustained through teaching community.
- Voluntary – relationships not enforced by authority.
- Development-orientated – teachers establish tasks rather than meeting to implement agenda of others.
- Pervasive over time and space – working together is not a scheduled activity. They may plan to meet but are not regulated.
- Unpredictable – outcomes are not predictable or certain as teachers have control over their work.

School improvement is a change in culture and Hargreaves' (1994) model is one lens through which to view this. As leadership is believed to be dependent on culture there is no one size fits all theory but if leaders can join up their leadership style, skills, knowledge and values to change the context then there is more chance of successful collaboration and collegiality (Dimmock, 2012). Teachers have to learn to interact with initiatives from teachers and leaders to create conditions where rich dialogue can take place about practice (Wahlstrom and Seashore Lewis, 2008). Brownell *et al* (2006) and Elmore *et al* (1996) warn collaboration may take place at different rates, some people will embrace it, and others may not, therefore, it may be developed over time through interaction and monitoring.

Headteachers have tried collaborative ways of working but this has not been successful as they sometimes underestimate the strength of the culture the school operates in (Datnow, 2011). Gosling *et al* (2009) note leadership needs to be understood from both a contextual and school culture perspective. Spillane and Diamond (2007) support this argument and suggest shared leadership occurs between followers, leaders and their context or setting as opposed to leader follower interaction. They argue success of sharing leadership is influenced by school culture. If some colleagues are negative about change then this will

influence others in the organisation. Costley *et al* (2010) point out the more embedded behaviour, rituals and activities are formed through tacit knowledge so it is difficult for people to bring to the fore and speak about them. This tacit knowledge needs to be unpicked to form a community of practice where they all have similar behaviour, rituals, and activities to work to similar goals. Collaboration and collegiality can be studied once the culture has been taken into consideration as collaborative actions and collegial relationships constitute working conditions (Clement and Vandenberghe, 2000; Kelchtermans, 2011).

Wahlstrom and Seashore Lewis (2008) discovered high trust schools showed more collaborative school level decision-making, therefore, the level of trust that exists impacts on the level of collaboration in the school and whether people will work beyond their roles. Trust reduces the sense of risk (Bryk and Schneider, 2003; Seashore-Lewis *et al*, 2009). Social interaction with colleagues builds trust (Bryk and Schneider, 2003). Johnson (2003) in his study of four Australian schools found feelings of collegiality, trust and openness develop thorough a process of personal and professional 'sharing or disclosure'. This indicates the key issue for leaders to consider is working relationships in their organisation. Tarter *et al's* (1989) study implies headteachers can build trust through supportive behaviour but they cannot make teachers trust one another through direct action. Giving up accountability to teachers mean headteachers give up control (Wahlstrom and Seashore Lewis, 2008). There is little about how or why headteachers trust teachers (Wahlstrom and Seashore-Lewis, 2008) but we know that schools with higher levels of engaged teachers displayed higher levels of trust.

Collaborative cultures are important for middle leaders to feel supported and valued (Hammersley-Fletcher, 2005) and trust is a way to enable this to occur (Bottery, 2003a). Trust means people realise they can share things with others in the group to build community (Halverson, 2007). Middle leaders can raise issues of concern senior leaders may not wish to hear (Arrowsmith, 2004). Serva *et al* (2005) carried out a longitudinal study into trust in teams and concluded the perceived ability of colleagues was a strong indicator of trust and trust was a significant predictor for risk taking behaviour. When risk and interdependence exist, the solution is to increase and build trust (Raes *et al*, 2011). Bryk and Schneider (2003) claim higher levels of trust mean decision-making occurs but when trust is not embedded then there will be issues resolving the simplest problems. Bottery (2003b) refers to 'practice trust'. In other words, trust that is based around role and suggests repeated encounters increase the amount of knowledge about a person, and therefore, their trustworthiness. Each middle leader respects each other's integrity,

therefore, the relationship becomes a personal thing they want to maintain, and this trust may then become stronger through use and depleted through lack of use.

Blase and Blase (1999) argue as schools, or departments within them, become collaborative they tend to become less political in terms of power and competition over one another. Schools enjoying a culture of trust have teachers who will work together as a community and go beyond minimum expectations of their role (Tschannen-Moran, 2007).. Seashore-Lewis *et al* (2009) found where trust existed and people felt able to influence schools' decisions there were less negative politics compared to schools where trust did not exist. Without a level of trust and safety, teachers will not be willing to engage in collaboration with others as they feel this may threaten their beliefs and values (Tschannen-Moran, 2007; Kelchtermans, 2011). When trust exists and middle leaders' sense support from each other and senior leaders they may begin to feel safe taking part in new practices of sharing whole school decision making with the senior leadership team (Bryk and Schneider, 2003).

There has been discussion how far collegiality may be perceived as being 'contrived' in schools (Fidler, 2001) and it has been referred to as a form of managerial control (Johnson, 2003).). Hargreaves (1994) coined the phrase 'contrived collegiality' and defines this as replacing 'spontaneous, unpredictable, and difficult to control forms of teacher generated collaboration with forms of collaboration are captured, contained, and contrived' (Hargreaves, 1994, p196). Hargreaves (1994) is clear in stating the difference between cultures where collaboration takes place and those where collaboration is contrived. In collaborative cultures 'working relationships between teachers tend to be spontaneous, voluntary, development-orientated, are pervasive across time and space and unpredictable. These cultures are incompatible with 'school systems where decisions about curriculum and evaluation are centralised' (Hargreaves 1994, p191). Contrived collegiality is regulated, compulsory; implementation orientated and does not lead to meaningful or sustainable change (Hargreaves, 1994). Much of what Hargreaves (1994) has written about collaboration and contrived collegiality has remained important in how teachers work together (Datnow, 2011). Collaboration works best when teachers feel they are working as a team and given opportunity to meet as opposed to 'being robotically brought together for some forced reason' (Sergiovanni, 2004, p52). Jones (2009, p3) acknowledges senior leaders may see collaborative practices as extra workload on them and as a 'additional managerial burden rather than a strategic resource'.

Contrived collegiality has merits where it is used as a starting point to create conditions to allow collaboration to take place (Day, 1999; Sergiovanni, 2004; Datnow, 2011). Sometimes senior leaders have to create structured time for artificially constructed collaboration to take hold (Datnow, 2011). Sergiovanni (2004) makes the point contrived collegiality has to be understood and supported by senior and middle leaders in School A for it to take hold for genuine collaboration to result from it.

Another explanation for contrived collegiality could be mental models. Senge (1990) argues leaders have mental models which they use to base their leadership actions and behaviour on and clarifies these are ‘images, assumptions and stories’ (Senge 1990, p164). These mental models shape how we think, feel, and act. For example, if we believe middle leaders are not to be trusted then this is how we behave and act. The issue with mental models is when they exist below the level of leader consciousness as tacit knowledge. Hackman and Wageman (2007) argue they are built up over time through observations, trial and error, and experience and are ingrained so that the participants may no longer be aware of their influence and if the mental models are shaping their leadership behaviour. There are two main reasons why mental models are important and leaders need to be aware of them (Dimmock, 2012). They are rigid in nature are embedded once they have been formed so the leader has to be aware when they are relying on this automatic behaviour. Secondly, they need to be aware when they are reacting to leadership challenges by using mental models that are ingrained in them.

Little (1990) distinguished between different kinds of collegial relations and implications on teacher independence when she explored whether it was possible to teacher privacy when sharing practice and trying to get teachers to open up to each other as opposed to working behind closed doors.

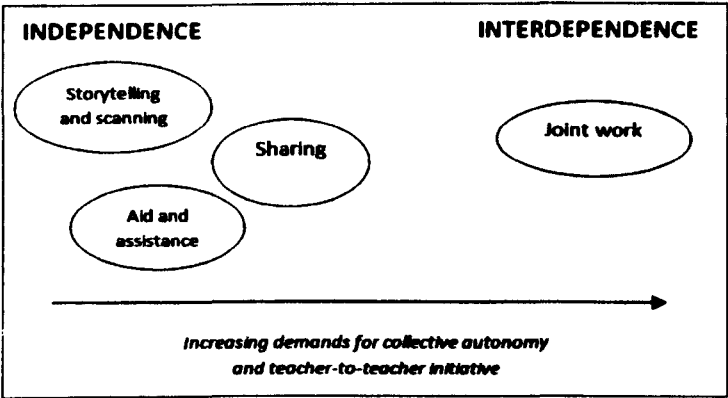


Figure 2 - Continuum of collegial relations (Little 1990, p512)

This diagram shows although there are many things can be classed as collegial or collaborative they have different levels of impact on teachers' autonomy and initiative. Storytelling and scanning, sharing and aid, and assistance are all collaborative in nature but have very little impact on teachers work. Joint work is the most effective where teachers have to genuinely share knowledge and collaborate and influences them the most, as they make adjustments. Little (1990) defines joint work as when teachers have a shared responsibility for work and it involves collective action. In School A, middle and senior leaders may wish to explore how they can move into 'joint work' in terms of shared decision making to make it collaborative as opposed to simply interacting.

Wenger (1998) defines a community as being 'constructed through people engaging with each other to develop a shared repertoire of actions in pursuit of a shared enterprise' (Wenger 1998, p73). He later clarified this definition of a community of practice as being formed by people who 'share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly' (Wenger 2006, p1). Sergiovanni (2004) claims communities are about people themselves and not their roles or tasks. Therefore, they are made up of three main areas of; people who live and work together (community of place); they are committed to common values (community of mind); and they feel a sense of belonging or obligation to each other (community of friendship). A community of practice is formed when workers engage in similar activities and learn about each other, the skills required for their job and how to achieve the corporate goal. Raelin (2008) defines a community of practice as people who engage in a common enterprise and Costley *et al* (2010) state a community is one which reflects itself and has a separate identity from other communities. However, not everything with a group of people can be a community of practice.

Sergiovanni (2004, p51) states cultural covenants and relationships are key to collaborative cultures.

'The cultural connections are more covenantal than contractual; they are bargains, but they are the bargains of the heart and soul based primarily on loyalty, purpose, sentiment, and commitment obligate people to one another and to the school. But covenants are much more than bargains: they are promises imply certain mutually held actions and commitments are considered obligatory. Unlike legal documents and other formal agreements spell out all the technical details, covenants are planted in the hearts of people and bind them together morally and obligate them morally to the conditions of the covenant.' (Sergiovanni 2004, p51)

Collegiality is often discussed in the context of ‘professional learning communities’ (Kelchtermans, 2011). Time and supportive school policies are important to form a professional community and school leaders can influence this to be formed as part of their leadership role (Wahlstrom and Seashore-Lewis, 2008). A key feature of a community of practice is a de-emphasis on hierarchy (Gronn, 2003) with work being a collective and joint effort between all members of the community.

Hierarchy

The traditional way in schools are structured does not help to pool middle leader and senior leader knowledge (Chenoweth, 2009). Clearly, hierarchy is a way for schools to rationalise work and institutionalise authority (Fitzgerald and Gunter, 2008) but Jackson (2000) suggests hierarchical structures have not served schools well. In hierarchical schools, where transactional leadership is pivotal there is less focus on human relationships and more on procedures and systems (Lee and Loeb, 2000; Somech, 2010). Beatty (2000) argues hierarchy contains leaders within roles and responsibilities that are not conducive to collaboration. Whilst it has also been argued that some headteachers prefer the power of having sole charge (Macbeath, 2005), some staff in schools may also prefer having a single leader as it gives them security and brings stability to the school (Dimmock, 2012). Individuals tend to define their affiliation to subunits and some have weak ties to the whole organisation (Bryk and Schneider, 2003). It is important, to allow efficient and effective shared decision making to take place so that schools do not operate as a collection of isolated departments. School structures and cultures determine the level of collaboration and ways in which collegiality may be experienced by middle leaders (Kelchtermans, 2011) so structures and systems that support collaboration should be set up. Torrington and Weightman (1989, p51) argue ‘staff are a school’s most important resource, but a resource which will remain untapped as long as each member is squashed in his or her limited role in a hierarchical, bureaucratic structure’.

There has been a traditional leadership viewpoint that senior leaders are at the apex of the hierarchy and information comes down to the staff, therefore, senior leaders set the tone for the organisation and make key decisions (Pearce and Conger, 2003). However, Thorpe *et al* (2011) argue that there is a lack of evidence for this type of leadership and the changes it claims to make to organisational outcomes. Trust is not a problem in cultures that are more hierarchical and bureaucratic because people are controlled and made accountable through the hierarchy by rules and norms as opposed to collaboration and trust. However, a better way to achieve teacher compliance is through commitment

(Hatcher, 2005). Despite this, government policy cannot rely on headteachers who may or may not secure transformational leadership so performance management mechanisms are used to secure compliance. Headteachers can be barriers to collaboration and sharing leadership with others as they can hold tightly to power and control, refrain from nurturing leadership at other levels and can choose to only involve those who support their agenda (Hatcher, 2005).

Hobbs (2006) argues having a large senior leadership team carries a risk of disempowering others and creates a top down management system at a time when schools are trying to share leadership across the hierarchy. Leadership should be extended beyond the headteacher for professional communities to form (Morrissey, 2000) and having too many people present at meetings can be detrimental (Hellawell and Hancock, 2001). The headteacher sets the tone for the school culture (Tschannen-Moran, 2007) and works with their senior leadership teams to 'orchestrate rather than dictate improvement and create learning communities in their schools' (Lambert and Harris 2003, p15). Change within a school simply cannot take place without the support of the headteacher or senior leaders.

Capacity Building

Autocratic leadership may be frustrating and constraining for those who wish to be more involved in bringing about change to their organisations (Stoll and Stobart, 2005; Hopkins, 2007). The ultimate aim of school improvement is it should make a difference to student outcomes and leaders should not be seen to be doing the right things (Stoll, 2009). Capacity building is an important concept to allow leadership changes that will improve student outcomes to be embedded and the capacity of middle and senior leaders can be developed to manage change with less conflict.

There are varying definitions of capacity building in the literature. Fullan (2001) states that capacity is multi-faceted and involves leaders working inside the school as well as with external partners to secure improvement. Capacity building has been defined as the power to enable and sustain teachers to learn and improve outcomes (Stoll, 2009). Harris and Lambert (2003) defined capacity building as:-

'From a relatively simple perspective, capacity building is concerned with providing opportunities for people to work together in a new way. Collegial relations are therefore at the core of capacity building' (Harris and Lambert, 2003, p4.)

They define collegial relations as being at the core of capacity building and reinforce this by saying ‘unless schools have built the internal capacity to manage change and sustain improvement, well intentioned reform will continue to have little impact’ (Harris and Lambert, 2003, p4). Hatch (2001) argues it may be necessary to harness the capacity that exists to develop and further build leadership capacity. There is an argument that the headteacher is an organisational capacity builder (Harris *et al*, 2003; Mulford and Silins, 2003). Stoll and Bolam (2005) argue there are three elements to building capacity: leaders should focus on creating the conditions, culture, and necessary structures to allow capacity building to develop. This process is individual to each establishment as they operate within different cultures (Stoll, 2009). Leaders should build opportunities for people to share experiences and opportunities and ensure the building of relationships. Capacity building occurs through conversations that enable leaders to explore and enhance current practice. A community of leaders sharing and analysing their practice in this way over time will help to develop internal capacity (Little, 2002).

Macbeath (2005) suggests others in the school have to accept this new type of leadership from middle leaders working from a whole school perspective as opposed to departmental perspective that may cause a conflict of loyalty between their departments and the whole school. Promoting a sense of community is less challenging in smaller sized schools (Bryk *et al*, 1999) and more challenging in secondary schools (Seashore Louis and Miles, 1992; McLaughlin and Talbert, 2007).

Headteachers in England remain very accountable for the success or failure of their schools through mechanisms such as Ofsted and league tables (Crawford, 2005). Headteachers may have concerns about sharing leadership with others in School A when they have sole accountability (Macbeath, 2005; Dimmock, 2012). They argue that the pressure of external accountability and targets may stop the development of capacity (Stoll and Temperley, 2009). There may be no time available to nurture capacity in schools because of other priorities, usually more pressing, external accountabilities, and data driven targets. Leaders may prefer the tried and tested methods as opposed to experimenting with capacity building and risk not meeting externally imposed targets (Stoll, 2009). Recruiting the right kind of people assists with devolving leadership (Spillane, 2006) but schools cannot make swift personnel changes or change leadership styles to suit the current climate in the same way businesses may be able to (Pearce and Conger, 2003). Capacity building involves exploring, risk taking, being different and adapting (Stoll, 2009) therefore, trust is critical for school leaders to engage in this type of reform (Bryk and Schneider, 2003). In their empirical study, Chapman *et al* (2008) reference a headteacher who has invested in

capacity building for succession planning and to sustain improvement in his school. He did this by involving middle leaders in senior leadership team discussions, increased their autonomy, placed greater trust in them and in return expected greater accountability. A teacher in the school described this Head's vision as 'directional and bringing it all together, moving middle leaders on to the senior leadership team and allowing them to grow together' (Chapman *et al* 2008, p7). He asks newcomers to spend time getting to know the school and make suggestions as to how they can contribute to move it forward as opposed to fitting into the current school culture. Involving middle leaders in whole school decision-making means senior leaders may get a different perspective on running the school that may help with the quality of decision-making. Developing leadership capacity is important if the school wants the initiative to be more than a temporary phenomenon. Leadership needs to be embedded within the culture and shared with other leaders in the school, therefore, leadership capacity is more likely to develop in schools where senior leaders aim to build a team.

There are other examples of how senior leaders have involved middle leaders in whole school decision-making. Halverson (2007) researched a case study of Adams School in Chicago where the headteacher tried to develop a community of practice using artefacts to create new routines to develop collegiality. At Adams School, the leaders established routines that allowed interaction to take place and, therefore, trust to build which in turn fostered the professional community. Curriculum leaders take ideas from discussions to teachers who try things out or feedback and bring them back to the meeting, to discuss and reflect on rather than the meeting being perceived as a pointless exercise. These meetings are not about innovation or assessment of practice that removes the threat of comparison that can threaten a professional community. This then provides closure to the discussion so the community can develop, interact, and move the school forward. The findings from Adams School show that routines may help to develop trust. While schools offer opportunity for interaction to take place it is worth noting that not all interactions help create a professional community. Some empirical studies have shown that if middle leaders' capacity is developed then they may influence change and outcomes. Francis (2007) carried out a study, on behalf of the NCSL, on five schools that had been placed into special measures and describe how middle leaders were used to harness effective school improvement. This demonstrates that by developing and nurturing middle leaders' abilities to manage change then there is the possibility to build leadership capacity. This strengthens then claim that middle leaders can make a difference within the current climate schools operate in.

Overall, this chapter has explored the current thinking and literature about school culture; relationships; job role; balkanisation; collaboration and collegiality; hierarchy; and capacity building. Chapter 4 will analyse the data from the participants and refer to the relevant literature.

Chapter 4 - Analysis

Data Collection

From December 2009 until March 2010 the first interviews were carried out and analysed to generate the initial interview, documentary and observation data from School A. The remainder of the interviews followed in the tradition of Glaser (1992) where the first few cases are interviewed and analysed and the remainder of the cases are gradually added to this data set to make up the study. Carrying out and analysing the first few interviews allowed me to see which questions were important to this study and which ones could be discarded as they were not useful to the study. It provided an opportunity to group questions into categories and put them into some kind of order. The questions changed slightly from the first few interviews but only to make some of the closed questions into open ones to encourage participants to speak in more detail about issues of concern to them. As the sample was small, all of the data was collected together and analysed as one data set.

The data showed the following concepts that emerged which are of importance to this study and each one will be discussed in detail in this chapter.

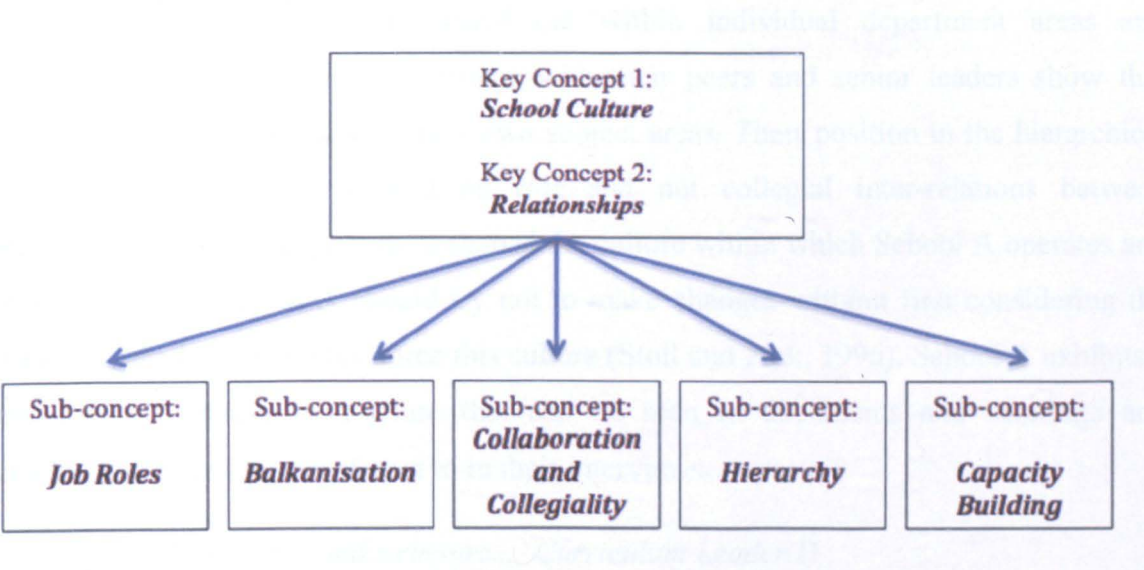


Figure 3 - Main Concepts and Themes which Emerged from the Data

School Culture

The above figure shows that two main overarching concepts emerged from the data as being the most frequently occurring concepts that appeared to be of the most importance to the participants. The five sub concepts are the remainder of the concepts that emerged from

the data, which were also of importance to explain what was happening in School A, but not as frequently occurring as the two main concepts. These two main concepts are underpinned by the five sub concepts. The remainder of the chapter will discuss the two main concepts of school culture and relationships. This will then be followed with a discussion of the five sub concepts of job roles; balkanisation; collaboration and collegiality; hierarchy; and capacity building that emerged from the data to underpin them.

Organisational culture is important to explore relationships in School A as this is the context within which both middle and senior leadership is exercised and explains why participants think and act the way they do (Bush and Bell, 2002). Individual schools have different realities and mind-sets making them all very different from each other with very distinctive cultures. To explore culture further it is necessary to observe the structures operating in School A. The organisation of the school building demonstrates and supports a balkanised culture. This can be observed in the staffroom where department members rarely mix and prefer to remain in individual subject departments.

'We have our own workroom areas and we tend to stay in subject areas whereas in the old school we had one staffroom and it was more easier to see people.'
Curriculum Leader A

Meetings of departments are carried out within individual department areas and observations of middle leader meetings with their peers and senior leaders show that middle leaders tend to focus on their own subject areas. Their position in the hierarchical structure is very much focused on role and not collegial inter-relations between departments. These structures have shaped the culture within which School A operates and senior leaders in School A should try not to make changes without first considering the structures which built and reinforce this culture (Stoll and Fink, 1996). School A exhibits a very strong hierarchical structure that can be seen in documents and meetings and something middle leaders referred to in their interviews.

'...it's hierarchy...and structure...' Curriculum Leader D

I observed a meeting where the school improvement plan, devised totally by senior leaders, was shared with middle leaders. Senior leaders arrived to the meeting with the final version printed out with a tacit expectation this will be followed and not questioned. There was little or no opportunity for middle leaders to have any input other than ask questions as to how this was to be implemented. This was evident through emails that followed up this meeting where compliance was the main thrust and message from the senior leadership

team to middle leaders. Scrutinising the physical environment shows subjects are very much balkanised into subject areas with little interaction between middle leaders other than formal calendared meetings. These observable rituals provide further evidence senior leaders direct strategy and middle leaders implement it. This part of the culture in School A is what Schein (2010) terms as 'artefacts' and observable actions and behaviours.

The next level to explore culture, according to Schien (2010), is beliefs and values. These were observed in practice and emerged as a theme from middle leaders interviews. Senior and middle leaders have a belief that it is very much the senior leaders role to lead the school and middle leaders role to support them in this. This appears to be embedded as an assumption as part of the culture of School A.

'...as middle leaders heads of department our job is to make those things happen in our departments...'. Curriculum Leader A

Senior leaders believe it is their responsibility to set meeting agendas for meeting between middle and senior leaders and their job to produce solutions. This assumption is embedded within the senior leadership team and, although interview data shows they wish to move away from this and work more jointly with middle leaders, it has become tacit knowledge below their level of consciousness.

'...it's moving away from the culture of...I think in some school traditionally...the senior leadership team have made all the decisions and told people what to do and I think that, that is a real danger...a real danger...we are your parents and you are our children...you know we are slowly moving away from that...'. Senior Leader Z

This may explain the anxiety felt by senior leaders when they try to alter the decision making process they have control over and attempt to hand this control over to middle leaders. This may explain the discrepancy between claiming they provide opportunities and reverting back to their original tacit values, as these are harder to alter. The behaviour is fitting what they want to do in practice but, unable to alter this deep found tacit knowledge and belief, they continue to revert to what they have always done. Middle leaders claim senior leaders arrive to meetings with solutions. This may be because senior leaders in School A are operating to fit innovations into the existing culture without being conscious they are doing this (Barth, 2007).

There is evidence of subcultures as each department appears to have its own way of doing things within the main school culture and this resonates with Hargreaves's (1994) balkanised culture theory. It appears that senior leaders either tolerate this culture, or are

not aware of it, as one senior leaders claims there is one culture in school A and not subcultures.

'...we don't have little cultures in this school where people do their own things we have a whole school system...' Senior Leader Y

Relationships - Leader-Member Exchange Theory

In School A, there is evidence that senior leaders have built relationships with individual middle leaders they line manage in the form of leader-member exchange dyads (Dansreau *et al*, 1975). However, senior leaders as a team appear to have created an out-group with middle leaders as a collective group. Middle leaders have a job role they are expected to adhere to (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995; Northouse, 2013) and rarely go beyond their job description or their job role, as they perceive it. This may explain why some middle leaders felt there was a 'them and us' culture in School A as in leader member exchange theory this resonates with a weak leader and follower relationship.

Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) propose three phases of leadership and it appears that School A is operating in stage one of 'stranger' phase. This is evidenced through meetings and general day-to-day observations and shows that middle leaders are working on contractual level with senior leaders as opposed to on a more personal level. Middle leaders appear focused on their own agenda and departments with hierarchy very much emphasised.

'...I think I would like to have more say over what I do in my department rather than being dictated to all the time...' Curriculum Leader A

This is little evidence of 'acquaintance' level as middle leaders do not appear to wish to take on new challenges and there was little evidence in the interviews that they are starting to focus beyond their own departments. There was very little evidence of a 'mature partnership' showing high degree of trust between middle and senior leaders or of middle leaders having any obligation beyond departmental level.

Middle and senior leaders appear to have different perceptions of their working relationship (Sin *et al*, 2009) with evidence that there was perception inflation from senior leaders than middle leaders. This disparity affects the quality of relationship between the two groups and although they are meeting regularly through calendared meetings, the quality of interaction is not strong. The middle leaders appear to have become even more balkanised in their departments because of the meetings as opposed to engaging with senior leaders. Senior leaders have not recognised it is not the amount of interaction but quality which is preventing a good working relationship from forming and preventing

middle leaders from giving more to the senior leaders (Chen *et al*, 2007). A good working relationship was what the senior leaders were proposing more than middle leaders and they wanted it to be seen to be working in their school (Glibrowski *et al*, 2007). Middle leaders may have felt more able to talk honestly as I was their peer and senior leaders may have said what was the right thing to say to fit the rhetoric. The data evidence showed conflict, mistrust, and frustration that are not signposts of a high quality leader member exchange in School A (Paglis and Green, 2002).

Leader member exchange theory is important as it highlights the possibility that in-groups and out-groups exist. It highlights why some leaders in School A may be more productive more others because they perceive themselves to be either part of the in-group as opposed to the out-group. It helps to illuminate why some leaders have stronger relationships with followers in School A. It may explain middle and senior leadership behaviour and working relationships with each other and why some are more productive and others remain counterproductive.

Job Role

Katz and Kahn (1978) describe role dissensus as being the difference between what middle and senior leaders each perceive the middle leader role involves and this comes through from the data from School A. Middle leaders indicate their main priority is their individual department and they view whole school issues as purely a senior leadership team domain.

'...I don't think it's a middle leader's job to do...it's for the SLT what they get paid to do this whereas I get paid to sort out my department...' Curriculum Leader C

'...whole school policies are something the senior leadership team have an overview of and something they do...' Curriculum Leader A

Middle leaders in School A tend to primarily view their role as classroom practitioners and leaders of their own departments (Fitzgerald and Gunter, 2007). They view their main role as lead subject teachers (Bush, 2002; Poultney, 2007). Middle and senior leaders are clear about role behaviours in their own mind and what others in the school expect of them within this role. This knowledge is engrained and embedded within the school culture and structures, which resonates with the idea of 'role set' (Katz and Kahn, 1978). Senior leaders have a bigger picture in their mind of the middle leader role and this appears to be almost on par with their own role in School A. The role middle leaders appears to adhere to that more of a manager managing their department under the control and direction of senior leaders (Raes *et al*, 2011). Senior leaders are believed to be the strategy formulators

and middle leaders implement it and this is the role set expectation in School A (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1996; Raes *et al*, 2011). However, senior leaders are viewing middle leaders as having a role in strategy formulation but appear not to be prepared to take the associated risks and allow middle leaders to genuinely make a decision and they try to control the decisions through contrived collegiality (Hargreaves, 1994).

Middle leaders in School A say they do not want any accountability for whole school decision-making and feel this is the job of the senior leaders. This was observed in one curriculum leader meeting where a discussion ensued about whether the school improvement plan should be streamlined or kept to the same number of priorities. Certain curriculum leaders very quickly turned the discussion to this was a decision senior leaders should be making and not curriculum leaders. Curriculum leader A typifies this below:-

'...senior leaders get paid more to look at the bigger picture the whole school stuff and a Head of Department is paid to look after their department...' Curriculum Leader A

Middle leaders felt it was role of the senior leadership team to be aware of what is happening in other departments. When asked whether departments should have a whole school focus and viewpoint Curriculum Leader B responded by saying:-

'...a lot of my decision-making and my leading is done in my department because is what I'm paid to do. I'm not really paid to focus at a whole school level...' Curriculum Leader B

There was an indication from one middle leader that there were a number of middle leaders in School A who do not wish to do more than the absolute minimum required. Middle leaders claimed they were too busy, some lacked interest in anything other than their department, and they whole-heartedly agreed that whole school decision-making was something for senior leaders and governors (Glover *et al*, 1999).

'...a lot of people in this school focus on their pay packets...' Curriculum Leader D

This may be because middle leaders feel they are lower down the hierarchy and pay scale than senior leaders and they are only prepared to contribute what they feel they are being paid for. Some middle leaders feel that they are being paid to work at a departmental level and feel this is their role. This indicates a transactional leadership style where middle leaders' reward appears to be their salary.

Middle leaders believe a leadership style where senior leaders instruct them does not encourage them to go beyond their own departments. However, senior leaders disagree and believe middle leaders do have a lot of power and say in decision-making in School A.

'...it's not like (indicating top down) it's like a sphere...and it's wider round the middle than anywhere else...because our middle leaders are powerful...' Senior Leader Z

'...It (policy) normally comes down as a readymade package...' Curriculum Leader B

This belief is evident from senior leaders that middle leader involvement is crucial to develop the school. However, this has not yet been embedded into the school culture and this would need to happen before this senior leader's vision could become a reality. It may mean changing the role of middle leaders from departmental heads to including a stronger whole school role and developing leadership capacity by training their middle leaders preparation for this. It would appear that senior leaders and middle leaders have not developed strategies for meaningful interaction (Spillane, 2006; Dimmock, 2012).

'...what we've realised is you can't sit up at the top...you can't sit there and tell everybody what to do...you encourage ownership...and you encourage responsibility...then you've more chance of getting what you want...' Senior Leader Y

Senior leaders described lack of middle leader involvement as frustrating for them in terms of school improvement. This may be because they are trying to alter, unconsciously, a strong culture of middle leaders defining their role as working in their departments and not across the school. School A resonates with the two tensions Bennett *et al* (2003) point out that middle leaders see themselves as accountable to their departments and senior leaders see them as accountable on a wider level. It indicates that they may be trying to change the job role and this role dissensus (Schmind and Daniel, 2011) is causing conflict with middle leaders because they do not agree with the changes (Katz and Kahn, 1978).

The current line management structure, and balkanised way, the school is organised appears to be restricting cross-departmental conversations and relationship building. This is reinforcing the ideology that individual departments have to fight for attention with other departments and creates a survival of the fittest environment that is at odds with what the senior leaders wish to achieve. Senior leader appears to be getting role compliance through

line management meetings where they check middle leaders are doing as they have asked (Katz and Kahn, 1978). Senior leaders and middle leaders may wish to see how much of this they are reinforcing through the culture and behaviours operating in School A.

This will involve a culture change and challenging thinking about existing cultural rituals and assumptions. For example, middle leaders do not attend senior leadership team meetings, middle leaders listen and senior leaders speak in leadership forum meetings as was observed, and middle leaders communicate with their senior leadership team manager in the hierarchy rather than with others senior leaders as and when necessary. In building trust and working relationships, the culture may begin to slowly change as middle leaders see they are starting to be trusted more and senior leaders are prepared to take more risks by letting middle leaders take an active part in meetings without it coming across as being contrived collegiality.

Middle leaders claim they would prefer to be consulted and do things through own will, choice, and motivation as opposed to being told what to do in their departments and whole school priorities. Middle leaders spoke of preferring to have more autonomy and being able to 'lead' as opposed to managing but this was in relation to their own departments' only and not whole school decisions. It appears senior leaders get compliance from middle leaders rather than co-operation and the emphasis on giving middle leaders instructions as opposed to consulting appears to be a regular occurrence recently. Curriculum Leader A told me:-

'...to be honest with you in the last year we have been told what to do and we haven't really been asked for our opinions or what we think ...' Curriculum Leader A

One middle leader feels frustrated with senior leaders for not allowing him any freedom and controlling what he needs to be doing in his department. There is a feeling senior leaders are micromanaging middle leaders and are not allowing them to develop.

'...it would be good to have a little more freedom over things we do in departments ...' Curriculum Leader A

In School A, it appears middle leaders do not have the power to influence what is being discussed at meetings as they feel they have to implement whatever senior leaders ask them.

'...I'm making a list of all the homework are going to be set from half term to Easter...I don't know WHY I'm doing it...' Curriculum Leader B

Senior leaders may wish to use meetings to verbally communicate and discuss their thoughts and ideas they have already decided on. This remains rooted in the belief that a middle leader's role is of strategy implementation, but middle leaders are going to the meetings expecting to be strategy formulators and this may be where the conflict is arising. There needs to be clarity as to what the senior leaders perceive the meetings to be for and what the middle leaders perceive them to be for. It appears this is being left very much open to interpretation and why middle and senior leaders feel they are working at cross-purposes.

Senior leaders feel they more they interact with middle leaders then the more they will be seen to be communicating and sharing ideas with them and not working in isolation from them. However, if these interactions are perceived by senior leaders as being meaningful and not by middle leaders then they just become additional workload. This may explain why middle leaders feel they are going to meetings and not finding them productive or finding the outcomes of any relevance. This relationship between roles and behaviour is rooted in leader member exchange theory. Therefore, frequent and regular collaboration and communication should narrow this role gap between middle and senior leaders and this comes from the quality of interactions and relationships they have with each other. School A may need to structure the relationship between middle and senior leaders to provide an incentive for collaboration and emphasise the collaboration element of this coming together and not the competition.

It may be as individual senior leaders have developed strong working relationships with their middle leaders they line manage, and not with all middle leaders. If they are going into the middle leaders forum feeling they have this level of working relationship with all middle leaders and have not realised it needs to be developed with all middle leaders and not just the ones they line manage for trust to be evident. This may explain why some participants were receptive to some ideas from those they know well and not from others they interact less with. Middle leaders may be aware of what they need to say, and how to go about communicating this to their senior leader line manager, for it to be acceptable because of the working relationship they have developed. However, this may not have translated across all the participants hence why sometimes the collective meetings go well and sometimes they do not and this links back to relationship building and trust.

Middle leaders in School A feel senior leaders are in charge of leading the school (Glover *et al*, 1999; Raes *et al*, 2011) and this is interesting as middle managers in schools are now referred to as ‘middle leaders’. In School A, the headteacher has changed the title from middle managers to leaders to try to signal their role is about leadership as opposed to departmental management. One headteacher’s rationale in Francis’s study (2007, p15) was ‘changing the name middle managers to middle leaders was important; it encouraged dialogue but it emphasised accountability, and who they were accountable to’. In School A, however despite the name change, middle leaders in practice are still managing their departments as opposed to leading. This is not helpful to trying to involve them in whole school decision-making. It is the culture is stopping middle leaders from taking part as this is not how they do things in School A and the school culture is coming through despite the name change to ‘leaders’ by the senior leaders. The name change alone has not embedded leadership behaviour from middle leaders and it is the much stronger school culture, which is embedded in deep beliefs and values that need to be altered for the change to take place in practice.

Middle leaders told me they are subject specialists. This was evident from observations of meetings where middle leaders put the onus of whole school decision-making back on to the senior leaders and deferred to them to make the decision.

‘...I think I’ve got a really clear vision and viewpoint of where I want our department to go so that’s what I’m sticking to...’ Curriculum Leader B

At the heart of a collaborative culture, being formed in School A is the notion those who work within the school can help with improvement and developing the school (Fleming 2000). This is a key for middle and senior leaders before collegiality can happen and this will involve a change in job role for both middle and senior leaders and a change of school culture. Middle leaders appear to assert their power over senior leaders ideas by resisting, implementing actions, or delaying them through asking for more discussion.

‘...I think...we have realised in SLT there is a capacity issue traditionally thinking the SLT will lead and even today there will be kneejerk reactions to things to the default setting we will discuss at SLT and yes sometimes you need to do but I think there’s a willingness to be involved...’ Senior Leader Y

However, it is the headteacher who creates conditions for facilitating collaborative work between senior and middle leaders in School A and whether the resulting collaboration is

genuine or remains contrived (Lieberman *et al*, 2007). This goes back to trust and relationships.

It is clear from the data that middle leaders feel their role is rooted in their own departments. They may be deriving some form of comfort from knowing their subject lead teacher role and being familiar with the expectations and requirements. These are regularly clarified in line management meetings and through the formal job description for the middle leader role. What the senior leaders are asking the middle leaders to do in taking part in whole school decision making may be taking them outside the comfort of this role as they are not as skilled or trained. They may feel less confident moving beyond their own role and being involved in decisions that they have little knowledge of. There are no clear instructions on how to carry out this new role through their job description or through experience, as it has not been done before in School A. This may explain why middle leaders are keen to reinforce whole school decision-making is not their remit and belongs to the role of senior leaders and appears to be a strong barrier to their involvement in whole school decision-making.

This indicates senior leaders may need to work with middle leaders on unpicking what the middle leader role entails in School A and what middle leaders perceive it to be to overcome role dissensus. There needs to be an agreement on this before they can move forward with developing their working relationship. Prior agreement of what the role is will mean that middle and senior leaders are not working at cross-purposes. If senior leaders in School A set out role expectations, or change the role expectations without prior consultation or negotiation, as they appear to have done, and middle leaders do not agree with these changes then they will not adjust their behaviour. They do not wish to act to the perceptions of senior leaders but to their own perceptions and this will cause role dissensus.

If the headteacher feels he can trust the middle leaders to make decisions for which he will be held accountable he may well be more prepared to allow them to be strategy formulators and not implementers. This trust does not appear to be in place currently in order to allow the collaboration intended to take place. It is through regular professional communication and dedicated relationship building that this mutual trust will emerge. The quality of interaction the senior leaders and headteachers have with their middle leaders during the meeting that will enhance this trust and openness.

If a transformational culture existed in School A and intrinsic satisfaction and motivation were the main driving force, then middle leaders would not be speaking about pay and

hierarchy as being a factor in how much extra work they are prepared to do beyond their perceived role. This important issue comes through from the interview data. Senior leaders, in turn, may also feel that they are being paid more than middle leaders and perceive their role as being more about strategic direction.

In conclusion, middle leaders may need to alter their viewpoint about working in their own departments and senior leaders may need to develop trust and working relationships across departments beyond a line management structure. It could be argued middle leaders are aware of what their role is in their own minds and are using their interviews as an opportunity to identify their role as being more about strategy implementers and not formulators. They may be hoping that by being frank in the interviews and it being reported in this study that this may lead to senior leaders seeing the difference as to what they perceive their role in School A is. Senior leaders, due to power relations, may have been describing the middle leader role as being more about collaboration and less about hierarchy. This could be because this is what they want it to be but this may not be how it exists in reality in School A. Senior leaders could be describing the ideal role for middle leaders and middle leaders themselves are describing the reality in School A. This may explain why the data indicates that their thoughts are in disagreement with each other.

Balkanization

In relation to balkanization the following themes emerged from the interviews as being important to middle leaders in School A. Middle leaders in School A appear to be much subject specialists, they view their role as being contained within their own department. This resonates with Lortie's (1975) description of schools operating in 'egg-crate' structures as middle leaders in School A indicate a genuine sense of belonging to colleagues in their own departments rather than with other colleagues across the school. They spoke of isolation from their middle peers and senior leaders. They indicated they meet in formal scheduled meetings and informal contact is generally kept to a minimum. Middle leaders feel senior leaders are responsible for running the school and appear to prefer a hierarchical model of leadership as opposed to sharing power with senior leaders.

Middle leaders migrate to their own departments with whom they appear to have more of a relationship. When carrying out observations of curriculum areas at break and lunchtime it became clear they remained in their own subject areas and did not move into other areas. I did not see a lot of interaction between colleagues from different subject areas and this was acknowledged in conversations with colleagues, which they permitted me to use in this study.

'...the old school (name of school) we all met in the staffroom a lot but this new building...nobody moves out of our departments...' Curriculum Leader D

One curriculum leader said she attached more importance to departmental work as opposed to whole schoolwork and said that this was because it was possible to see the tangible result of the work of the department compared to the whole school. It does very much feel that School A is geared towards task completion as opposed to developing leadership (Gunter, 2001).

'...I would like to spend more time on (subject) specific things with my department I can see and I would like to share some good practice with our Key Stage 4 teachers and some specific things to (subject) rather than kind of generic whole school stuff...' Curriculum Leader C

Middle leaders point out they feel more comfortable working on what they know in their own departments as opposed to new whole school initiatives which might take up more of their time or in which they might fail if they are not guided properly.

'...Most of my decision-making tends to be focused on my own department because I know what I'm doing there and what I'm talking about but I don't really know enough about what is happening across the school and I don't have overview to make whole school decisions...' Curriculum Leader A

Middle leaders acknowledge in the interview data they are not collaborative as a team of peers and appear not to know what is happening in other departments in the school shows evidence of balkanization. This resonates with (Fidler, 2001; Bush, 2002; Bennett *et al*, 2007) that there is a hierarchy of leaders and limited interaction between departments. This may something senior leaders have created themselves to maintain the control of hierarchy and the power this brings rather than try to build collegiality.

Curriculum Leader A typifies this by saying:-

'...I don't really look into what other departments are doing...' Curriculum Leader A

There is a feeling from middle leaders that they do not like the current set up of working in their own departments and only seeing their peers at formal calendared meetings, this links back to Hamersley Fletcher's (2005) observation that autocratic leadership leads to isolation. They say this is due to lack of time and to having their own curriculum area

subunits because of the way the school is physically organised. One curriculum leader said he would like to see less of departments working together more frequently. If leaders in School A discussed this more openly with each other and with senior leaders it may help to build collegial relations, however, at the time of writing there was little evidence of this observed in School A (Imants and Veen, 2010).

'...I wish there was more time to spend time with other curriculum leaders...for example (name of subject area)...I'm working on APP at the moment in (name of subject) and I would love to spend some time with (name of curriculum leader) to see how they are doing it...' Curriculum Leader B

The sense of isolation across departments and middle leader peers comes across in the interview data and through observations. A newly appointed curriculum leader explained that she has not been able to communicate with other middle leaders freely, apart from her allocated peer mentor, to compare what she is doing in her own department with other middle leaders in the school.

'...the time I see other middle leaders is when we've got an early closure session after school or an INSET session we don't really have any more because there is so much department time I see them there or I see them at Curriculum Leaders meetings we have ten times a year...' Curriculum Leader A

Participants indicated spending most of the day with their own departmental teams is a new phenomenon since they moved into the new building four years ago. In the previous building, which has now been demolished, the participants felt there was much more informal banter and interaction with other colleagues in the communal staffroom. There is currently little informal interaction in the main central staffroom with other departments or senior leaders in the school. This appears to have further increased isolation and a sense of 'them and us' for middle leaders.

'...at curriculum leader's meetings some middle leaders have tried to arrange opportunities to meet with each other but it didn't work because people are busy and it's just not the same level of interaction there was in the other school and it's a real shame...' Curriculum Leader A

Having one communal staffroom is viewed as a good way to build links and working relationships with other colleagues in the school. Most of the staff in the school congregated in the communal staffroom, as this was the facility to relax and have

refreshments away from the classroom environment. There was much informal interaction between colleagues from different departments, senior leaders and other non-teaching staff throughout the day. However, in the new building, each departmental area has their own individual workroom area with kitchen facilities and this is where most of the staffroom activities now take place within departmental teams resulting in isolation.

The interview data from senior leaders, documentary analysis, and observations was added to compare similarities and differences between what middle leaders and senior leaders thought. One senior leader was representative of senior leaders in acknowledging middle leaders do work in their departments but he believes there is some collegiality between them.

'...they all guard and protect their own area...but at the end of the day...it's their main focus and they will battle with other curriculum areas to get the essentials and the funding...but I think they have a shared vision...which is put across well...at (School A's) achievement and pushes all the time...so although they've got their own areas and they're jealous...and they should be...they are competitive...but they don't lose track of the bigger picture...' Senior Leader Z

Middle leaders were keen to assert allegiance to their departments during interviews and this was seen in observations of meetings, listening to workroom conversations and minutes of meetings where contributions were related back to their departments as opposed to the whole school. Their priorities appear to be rooted in the work their own subject areas were engaged in and not priorities of the whole school and this was seen in minutes of curriculum area meetings which are available to all staff via the school network and which I accessed, for research purposes, with the permission of the headteacher and curriculum leaders. This allegiance was observed at curriculum leader meetings where middle leaders demonstrated and responded to points raised from a departmental perspective. In the autumn term, I observed a curriculum leader meeting concerning middle leaders taking on a whole school project and working together collaboratively. However, instead of thinking in whole school terms and working together on a joint project, the discussion soon reverted to individual department needs and priorities as being more relevant. Middle leaders appeared to view this meeting by senior leaders as not the best use of their time. Despite this, analysis of the school improvement plan in April 2013 showed the departmental priorities were linked more to the whole school priorities than middle leaders appeared to be aware of. This may be due to compliance through line management meetings by the senior leadership team.

This was echoed by another middle leader who told me he could not see any real value in what senior leaders were proposing as whole school priorities but did as senior leadership team instructed him. This shows evidence of compliance and power of the senior leaders.

'...I'm making a list of all the homework is going to be set from half term to Easter...I don't know WHY I'm doing it...' Curriculum Leader B

There is a hint in the interview data perhaps middle leaders do not always support or agree with the value or purpose of certain school policies they are being asked to embed by senior leaders. One curriculum leader typifies the general feeling and said they feel they are unsure of some of the policies and are left defending them to their teams.

'...you are trying to keep the peace between your team and senior leaders...and I find myself wearing two hats sometime...I find myself defending my team to senior leaders...and then you'll try to get a message through to your team from the senior leadership team...trying to support them...it depends on being two faced sometimes because you need to wear both hats and that can difficult, especially if you're forced between the two really quickly like...in one breath it's like why do they choose to do this and with the other it's well we've got to do this...' Curriculum Leader B

This may be due to what Coleman (1998) refers to as closing the loop. There was evidence that once the meeting agenda had been set there was no opportunity to revisit this after it had been discussed. There was little evidence of middle and senior leaders closing the loop or evidence of feedback after the meeting that I was aware of. The senior leaders appear to have plan of action and there was not chance to discuss this, reflect on the idea, or make suggestions, or feedback any positives or failures in department. It was assumed it would be carried out and senior leaders would check this through line management for accountability and compliance. This left little opportunity for middle and senior leaders to develop social capital (Coleman, 1998; Halverson, 2007).

Over the course of a day, towards the end of the summer term, I spent some time in the central staffroom observing how often it was used and to see if my observations corroborated what middle leaders told me about isolation from other colleagues. Before school started one member of staff came into the staffroom to collect their post, nobody came in during break time, during lunchtime, two teaching assistants used the staffroom to have their lunch, and six members of staff collected their post. Five members of staff were observed collecting their post after school. None of the staff were observed interacting

with each other for any great length of time apart from a cordial greeting or a quick conversation. Senior leaders appear to be aware people remain in their own departments. I observed this as I was aware there was little interaction between departments but I wanted to gain some evidence for this study.

'...I think sometimes people think they have to stay within their little zone...' Senior Leader Y

The data highlights the 'egg crate structure' referred to by Lortie (1975) appears to be in place in School A. This can be observed and seen in minutes of meetings and through documentary analysis. Departments tend to be focused on their own subject areas and bringing their own priorities to the fore rather than thinking collaboratively as a whole school. This is encouraging balkanization to exist in School A.

There is resistance to implementing ideas middle leaders feel may not be the best decisions to implement in School A and resistance is a way they feel they can exercise their power as middle leaders. It may even be that middle leaders are not resisting the proposal itself but the fact that they have been forced to do it.

'...and I think, sometimes, we asked to do things require a hell of a lot of effort but don't have much impact at all. So those things I try and minimise and I try and focus on some things are going to raise pupil's attainment or get the results up in the department...' Curriculum Leader B

The interview data shows that individual departments and the whole school appear to be two separate domains as opposed to a single school heading in one direction. One curriculum leader showed me the department plan he had written for his department and told me quite firmly that it was not linked to the whole school priorities because he felt that these were not the things he needed to focus on to drive his department forward improve departmental results. There was a feeling all his personal efforts to move his department has resulted in success because he knew what needed to be improved than what senior leaders were imposing on him.

'...I'm sure is because of the work I'm deciding the department is going to do not because the school is deciding what the department is going to do...' Curriculum Leader B

One senior leader echoes this and agrees middle leader contact is mainly through curriculum leader meetings and other opportunities to meet are for them to arrange informally.

'...we have the curriculum leaders meetings which are something like 6 or 7 a year and is the opportunity for them to get together...to meet up apart from only if they decide they want to get together...' Senior Leader Z

All senior leaders interviewed felt many opportunities were being provided for collaboration but middle leaders were not taking up these opportunities effectively and it is up to middle leaders how much they get out of them. Senior leaders feel that there is a whole school focus on things like behaviour management. They feel each department's focus is similar as this focus is set through line management meeting agendas which all focus on the same whole school areas such as data management and making sure standards are maintained across departments. There appears to be disparity in this between viewpoints of middle and senior leaders.

There appears to be a genuine attempt by the headteacher of School A to try and break down balkanization between subject areas and try to refocus their thinking so they no longer view each other as competitors but work together for the good of the whole school. This viewpoint appears to be apparent from the middle leaders who indicated they preferred to work with middle and senior leaders in School A. It is apparent the openness and willingness for this to happen is evident from both middle and senior leaders and this is a good starting point for breaking down balkanization between departments. However, despite this willingness, in practice middle leaders work in their own areas. This can be seen in observations and minutes of meetings at School A. I observed several curriculum leader meetings where the focus turned from whole school thinking, which the senior leaders tried to do, back to individual departments and their own individual priorities. An example of this was a curriculum leaders meeting which took place in the Spring term of 2012 where middle and senior leaders were discussing number of hours available to curriculum areas. Instead of thinking in whole school terms, as in what would be the best decision for the whole school, the middle leaders present reverted to discussing the pros and cons for their individual departments rather than for the school as a whole. This may be due to the unwritten rules of the culture of School A each department does not tread on the territory of others and this may be encouraging and reinforcing balkanization and anything else is viewed as going against the perceived way of doing things within the organisational culture. This may be due to not having the working relationships as a team

of peers and approaching whole school decision-making and priorities as departmental competitors rather than a cluster of colleagues making decisions that are for the benefit of the whole school.

Raes *et al* (2011) investigated the interaction between senior and middle leaders and found middle leaders understand their role as implementers of strategy with senior leaders as formulators. This is evident from school A from meeting observations and looking at minutes of meetings where the agenda focuses on items but a record of the minutes show the decision has been made already before the meeting took place.

'...it tends to come down in the form of a school improvement plan and we write a department plan but all the discussions have already taken place by others...'
Curriculum Leader A

It may be necessary to consider the culture of the school in that it is perhaps focused on operational tasks as opposed to developing leadership. It could be argued the headteacher and the senior leadership team are more focused on leadership development when thinking about priorities and involving others and there is a disparity with middle leaders who are focusing on operational tasks rather than developing a leadership culture. This is linked to culture and how roles are defined. It may be a barrier if middle leaders have not viewed their own roles as formulators of strategy and feel their job is more of an operational level and this is at odds with what the senior leaders are trying to do. The middle leaders, their peers and senior leaders appear to be alienated from each other and this is enforcing invisible barriers.

Middle leaders in School A speak of a sense of isolation from their peers and senior leaders. This may be related to relationships and it is easier to build relationships with their departmental colleagues as they interact with them more and have trust and working relationship that already exists. It is challenging to build trust and a working relationship with middle and senior leaders when they only have contact at formal meetings. Much of the communication in between meetings is through emails due to the large school building and this may be a factor is preventing relationships and trust from building beyond an operational level. This may explain why middle leaders prefer the balkanized culture of their departments as opposed to working more collaboratively because they prefer to remain with what they are comfortable and familiar with. They are able to ask questions and not have a fear of failure in their own team compared to when they are working with middle leader peers whom they are not as familiar with and do not have a deep working

relationship with. The more middle and senior leaders work together, try to break down communication barriers and build greater collaborative working relationships the more trust will develop between them. This may mean middle and senior leaders may be more willing to let their guard down and take more risks in sharing formulating and implementing strategy.

The senior leaders point out that middle leaders are too entrenched in their own departments and this prevents them from seeing the whole school view (Adey, 2000; Poultney, 2007). Although collaboration and collegiality is not the solution to all problems, if School A can move middle leadership development from individual endeavours to more collaborative ways of working then this may result in sharing expertise (Jarzabkowski, 2003). This may help develop and form a community of practice related to whole school shared decision making to emerge as both middle and senior leaders start to work together (Sergiovanni, 2004). In School A, senior leaders may need to alter the culture so everyone's efforts are dependent on success and not just through policy which has been formed through the senior leadership team as is the current viewpoint. Senior leaders need to recognise this is happening and that they themselves may be viewed as a barrier to collaborative working relationships.

Middle leaders in School A need to understand what the vision of the school is, fully appreciate and understand the work underway and be able to carry out tasks once they can see why they are being asked to do certain things (Harris and Lambert, 2003). It may be that as senior and middle leaders develop, they may take more risks and develop expertise together that could result in greater outcomes for pupils and a way to secure prescribed changes effectively (Fullan *et al*, 1991; Hargreaves, 1994). Senior leaders in School A may wish to acknowledge that there may be some disagreement between middle leaders and this is a normal (Datnow, 2011). This can be seen in School A, as one source of disagreement the middle leaders identified was where they felt the pace of change and introduction of initiatives was too fast at School A.

'...does happen a lot here where we start things and then we never quite finish and then move on to something else which is really frustrating...' Curriculum Leader A

However, through this conflict better solutions for senior leaders may appear which may not have been considered as a result of sharing decision making with middle leaders (Leithwood and Mascall, 2008). Middle leaders can be used as an on-going assessment tool as to whether to proceed with a new strategy in School A, keep the strategy or to adapt

it because middle leaders are often the ones who see new opportunities and use these to initiate and champion new initiatives. Currently, however, as soon as conflict arises in School A both middle and senior leaders tend to not work through this disagreement but retreat from the conflict. Once they realise conflict is a necessary part of collaborative decision making, they may be more willing to keep working through the conflict as something not to be feared but through which better decision-making may arise. The senior leaders in School A may need to develop strategies for best managing this inevitable conflict and competing thoughts to channel energies into good collaborative decision making as opposed to conflict. A way forward may be through building communities of practice firstly between middle leader peers and, secondly, with middle and senior leaders and through building social capital (Halverson, 2007).

Working on things which middle and senior leaders find mutually meaningful could be a way of building a community of practice during the middle leader forum meetings. Closing feedback loops may be needed for curriculum leader meetings in School A as middle leaders enter into things in meetings but have no feedback and do not understand why they need to be done or have to be done. This comes through from the interview data that they feel they cannot agree the priorities to work on with the senior leaders. This may be a way of making initiatives more meaningful as practice in School A currently appears to fit the open loop aspect of this theory at this moment in time and not closed loop. It is important to note practice sometimes changes little for some participants proving perhaps collaboration does not always change practice (Elmore *et al*, 1996; Brownell *et al*, 2006). Elmore *et al* (1996) suggested when middle or senior leaders hold strong views they find it hard to learn from each other. It may be useful in School A to use the 'closed loop' thinking proposed to see how much practice from shared decision making is being embedded.

Collaboration and Collegiality

Collaboration in school A appears to mean teachers who co-operate with each other by working together, however, this interaction does not involve deep relationships but simple co-operation to complete tasks. This basic collaboration almost appears to be enforced by senior leaders, as without the middle leader forums, which middle leaders are contractually obliged to attend, there would be little or no interaction at all. Collegiality, on the other hand, is defined as requiring more deeper working relationships which are nurtured by participants (Jarzabkowski, 2003) and this appears not be evidenced in the data collected from School A.

In analysing collaboration in School A, it has to be explored why senior and middle leaders wish to collaborate and share leadership with each other. It is clear from middle and senior leaders in School A that they wish to be seen to be collaborating with each other and this is how they want to do things in School A. However, interview data and observations at School A indicate implementation between middle and senior leaders in school A appears to be weak and this supports the findings of studies conducted by Anderson (1998) and Wahlstron and Seashore-Lewis (2008).

Collegiality depends on relationships (Harris and Lambert, 2003; Keltchermans, 2011) and this appears to be something the senior leaders in school A are keen to embed but they do not appear to have created the conditions necessary in the school culture or through building the necessary relationship foundations on which to build collegiality. It is almost as if the leaders in School A are still working towards the single leader model with the headteacher being in charge alongside the senior leadership team. Although this style of leadership has been challenged in the literature (Lambert, 2002; Harris and Lambert, 2003; Spillane and Diamond, 2007; Robinson, 2009; Townsend, 2011; Dimmock, 2012) it appears to be active in School A. This is evidenced through the lack of involvement and ownership from middle leaders (Andrews and Lewis, 2002).

'...it would mean I would have some ownership in the way things are done and always helps and I think if you go and work in a place where you think you have no real control over what happens or decisions are made then I think fundamentally you've got less interest in what you are doing...' Curriculum Leader B

Senior and middle leaders do not appear to be supporting each other on a deeper level or beyond the official meetings or designated tasks. There is little evidence of spontaneous collaboration on projects outside of the official meeting and this is evidenced through observations, minutes of meetings and through interview data by both middle and senior leaders.

It would appear from the data the senior leaders seem to be clear about the purpose of collaboration in School between middle and senior leaders but middle leaders are not at this stage yet and appear to be unaware as to why they are being asked to collaborate. There is a desire for collaborative cultures and teamwork, and this is what senior leaders are striving for, but middle leaders prefer the opposite of balkanisation and teacher privacy (Lieberman *et al*, 2007). Several researchers have raised the point that collaboration needs to have a purpose before it can be considered as meaningful. The data indicates senior

leaders and middle leaders have not worked through this and may be working together but have not clarified what the outcomes of their collaboration are in order to measure success.

This supports Hammersley-Fletcher (2005) findings where both middle and senior leaders talked about collaboration in conversation but in practice, it was not evidence as the analysis in this section shows. She noted headteachers in her study felt unable to hand over to others when they were accountable and this may explain why senior leaders in school A may be reluctant in terms of what is a priority to hand over the middle leaders. This could explain the disparity between middle and senior leaders priorities and why decisions are already made before middle leaders meet.

'...and I think, sometimes, we asked to do things require a hell of a lot of effort but don't have much impact at all...'. Curriculum Leader B

'...AFL board thing was pinned up on the notice board in the work room and we're all expected to contribute to it without any reason why it was put there it was just pinned up and we were just told to use it...'. Curriculum Leader A

When asked about collegiality, collaboration and working together it emerged from middle leaders' collaboration and collegiality appears not to be strong, with a belief there may be too many middle leaders for effective collaboration to take place.

'...I think sometimes with all the curriculum leaders together in meetings it can become a little bit kind of a little bit unstructured...'. Curriculum Leader B

Senior Leader Y explained why he thought consultation with middle leaders was important and believed it was happening in School A.

'...I think a lot of information was cascaded down to them and jobs were cascaded down to them and they were told what to do and how and I think now there's a lot more they are a lot more involved in the decision-making of the school and the school improvement plan. They have a say, more of a say now, and are encouraged to have more of a say in the way the school is being shaped...'. Senior Leader Z

He went on to explain why the senior leadership team in School A wished to involve middle leaders in decision making.

'...what we've realised it you can't sit up at the top...you can't sit there and tell everybody what to do...you encourage ownership...and you encourage

responsibility then you've more chance of getting what you want... Senior Leader Y

However, senior leaders say they are supportive of collaboration with middle leaders; middle leaders are a little less keen to collaborate with senior leaders. This may be because they are concerned about the change in, their clear-cut roles in the hierarchy, the loss of autonomy in their department through collaboration.

Middle leaders in School A have appeared to underestimate the benefits of collaboration (Imants and Veen, 2010).

'...I think SLT could consult with us more with things affect us but other than I am happy with the role I have in school and I wouldn't like to change it for something else. I wouldn't like to be taking on more whole school stuff as I already have enough to do...' Curriculum Leader A

If the culture of School A is not geared towards teacher learning then middle leaders may not be motivated to engage with each other and, if they do, they may not be motivated to put into practice what they have learned (Mooney-Simmie *et al*, 2012). Therefore, senior leaders in School A may need well designed opportunities for collaboration so they can see benefits of shared decision making in comparison to the current model. Senior leaders in School A much see themselves as the leaders and revert to this in their actions despite what they say in their interviews.

'...they don't have time to consult because they've not built it into their planning...' Curriculum Leader B

If senior leaders can design opportunities where they are comfortable that decisions do not always have to be made by them and they begin to challenge when mental models come into play for middle leaders. An example of this is if middle leaders feel it is the senior leaders role to make decisions and formulate strategy and the middle leader role to implement them. Some middle leaders are happy to be strategy formulators, others just want to be implementers, and there is a disparity in this coming through in the data. It may be that senior leaders need to consider whom they are devolving leadership to, whether the skills are there, and that they are planning for this carefully. Currently it appears it is unplanned and not helping the School to grow (Harris, 2008).

Senior Leader Z gave me a specific example of when he tried to consult with middle leaders about the role of teaching assistants in the school.

'...at the last curriculum leaders meeting was myself and (name) the SENCO going to curriculum leaders and talking about the role of the SENCO and it didn't work out as well as we have wanted it to and there needs to be a follow up...and the idea was curriculum leaders got some SAY into how they wanted the role of the TA to develop rather than just accepting what the ECM (Every Child Matters) agenda suggests and what the SENCO decided was the role of the TA...' Senior Leader Z

The key finding from the data appears to be that middle and senior leaders recognise collaboration, as the act of coming together to work on projects (Kelchtermans, 2011), but they have not yet created or embraced the working relationships needed to turn the collaboration into collegiality. Perhaps they are simply co-operating with other as opposed to collaborating as the relationships are not yet deep enough or well enough established.

'...At curriculum leaders (meeting) some middle leaders have tried to arrange opportunities to meet with each other but it didn't work because people are busy and it's just not the same level of interaction there was in the other school and it's a real shame...' Curriculum Leader A

The interview data shows that senior leaders have realised they need to collaborate and have attempted to build capacity within the middle leadership team to move the school forward.

'...It's certainly an openness to middle leaders to get involved in greater things on a wider scale and remit than their own department...' Senior Leader Y

'...I do think we have become more open to it because it's not because we have to...but because we have seen...there is an ability out there...there are a lot of middle leaders out there with a strong potential to come through to senior leadership roles and might not be here...it might be elsewhere but there is a sort of...there is a sort of real talent there to pull from...' Senior Leader Y

The interaction between middle and senior leaders is restricted due to time constraints and they have fewer opportunities to interact with each other than they do with their peers (Raes *et al*, 2011). Middle leaders mention issues of time (Glover *et al*, 1999) and workload (Brown and Rutherford, 1996) as potential barriers to collaboration in School A.

'...I think there is a workload is an issue...' Curriculum Leader C

'...when would we have the time to meet with each other to work together properly...' Curriculum Leader A

The data show School A does not appear to have conditions where rich dialogue takes place.

'...it is quite clear in curriculum leader meetings there are two or three people have the most to say and to be honest we just quarrel...' Curriculum Leader D

Datnow (2011) found where headteachers and senior leaders take the time to create the conditions they expect for meetings then collaboration is more meaningful. In School A there appears to be no expectations or outcomes for the scheduled meetings other than middle leaders will listen and the senior leaders will talk.

Comments from middle leaders are not encouraged and any middle leaders who challenged this were refuted during the meeting leaving some afraid to speak or be seeing to disagree with senior leaders.

'...I think they see as consultation and when we go to curriculum leader we see it as something else...as being perhaps told what to do...' Curriculum Leader C

'...the word discussion is a moot term because discussion doesn't necessarily mean involvement...and if you end up compromising on something as we did then you water it down...' Curriculum Leader D

The actions of the headteacher and the senior leaders will either support or disregard collegiality but the current culture School A is operating in appears to be one of balkanisation (Hargreaves, 1994). Senior leaders in School A indicated they believe the school will improve faster in terms of pupil outcomes if they share out leadership beyond the senior leadership team with other leaders in the school and utilised these skills. However, middle leaders in School A did not share this thinking or verify this as being a reason for them to work together.

Despite senior leaders believing middle leaders are involved in whole school decision making, and this has been embedded as a process at School A, they acknowledge there is a way to go in terms of embedding it fully. They believe the foundations of middle leaders being involved in whole school decision-making have been laid.

'...for example here we have encouraged middle leaders with two or three things...here is an incentive to get involved and lead whole school things e.g.

behaviour for learning framework which was given back to middle leaders to really think about to discuss to amend and to present the changes back to staff and I don't think would have happened last year. I think it would have been led by SLT, discussed and presented back but here it was looked over at SLT and given back and discussed and then went back to a wider forum...' Senior Leader Y

'...I think now we've got a much stronger middle leadership team...and a much more forward thinking middle leadership team...' Senior Leader Y

Despite this strong feeling from middle leaders' senior leaders opposed their thinking and said they do consult with middle leaders on issues they feel necessary and relevant. It may be that senior leaders and middle leaders have different viewpoints on what is a priority.

'...we definitely consult middle leaders with appropriate issues...' Senior Leader Y

'...I'm making a list of all the homework are going to be set from half term to Easter...I don't know WHY I'm doing it...' Curriculum Leader B

'...a lot of the things are much things SLT think are a priority but not necessarily what we think are a priority so for example these PELTS (Personal Learning and Thinking Skills) and differentiation things like we have been doing for years SLT decided those are things we need to particularly focus on especially when they come to write the SEF so I don't think we have an awful lot of influence over the things we want to do...a lot of those are things are sent down or are whole school things everybody has to do...' Curriculum Leader A

Contact between middle and senior leaders in School A is limited due to heavy time restrictions (Raes *et al*, 2011). Sergiovanni (2001) suggested middle and senior leaders do need to work together to narrow the gap in their working relationship and points out perhaps middle leaders needed more training in this.

'...I don't think I have the experience to influence at whole school decision-making level...' Curriculum Leader A

Leithwood *et al* (2007) identified two conditions for sharing leadership. It should be shared with those who have the skills, knowledge and expertise and it should be planned and co-ordinated in some way. Senior and middle leaders are both in role so senior leaders can share the leadership with the middle leaders who they have in post. Middle leaders have acknowledged they do not always have the skills.

'...We are just put into post and then it is assumed we know what we are doing and how to handle things but it would be nice to have more input in this...' Curriculum Leader A

'...I don't think middle leaders have enough information to get involved in school improvement...' Curriculum Leader A

Senior leaders inadvertently acknowledge their lack of trust and belief in middle leaders skills through contrived collegiality. The senior leaders have tried to plan and co-ordinate sharing leadership through formal meetings, and there is no other evidence, but this has come across as contrived to middle leaders who view it as an additional burden on their time and not beneficial as curriculum leader C typifies:-

'...they have curriculum leader meetings because senior leadership want to show they are talking to us...' Curriculum Leader C

When assessing the culture of school A it is useful to view it using the model proposed by Hargreaves (1994, p192-193). He defines collaborative cultures as having five features. Collaborative cultures are spontaneous and develop through relationships are sustained and maintained by the community. There is not much evidence of this in the data with a preference for balkanisation over collaboration with little mention of relationships other than within own departments.

The relationships in School A appear to be enforced through formal meetings.

'...right...well we have curriculum leader meetings...but they are formal affairs aren't they really...' Curriculum Leader B

'...we much work in our own departments and come together ten times a year at Curriculum Leader meetings...' Curriculum Leader A

There is little evidence of voluntary relationships outside of curriculum areas or outside of the senior leadership team. The collaboration should be development orientated and not to implement the agenda of others.

'...I rarely get to talk to a curriculum leader informally...it's sad really cos you feel...you know...I as a new curriculum leader...could probably benefit from it..'. Curriculum Leader B

The collaboration should be pervasive over time and working together is not scheduled activity is regulated. Collaboration should be unpredictable in terms of outcomes and in school A the senior leaders decided on the outcomes leaving little room for unpredictability. These conditions require input from both middle and senior leaders where collaboration can develop (Wahlstrom and Seashore-Lewis, 2008). It cannot be something is 'done' by senior leaders to middle leaders. It develops from trust and working relationships over time through the context middle and senior leaders are working within. Middle and senior leaders may need to acknowledge this may take place at different rates for people (Elmore *et al*, 1996).

There may be senior and middle leaders for whom this way of working will not be embraced as it involves change for to ways of working for both senior and middle leaders. They may need to work towards building a community of practice where they all work towards the same goals, rituals, and behaviour in School A. The context is important, as this is much more than just effective interplay between middle and senior leaders. Trust and much deeper relationships need to be cultivated. Diamond and Spillane (2007) have argued hierarchy is not helpful for sharing leadership in schools and this appears to be the case in School A.

'...I perceive it as the hierarchy it is. It will come from the Head and the SLT and speed it's way down like on a tree...' Curriculum Leader C

Senior leaders feel middle leaders are too busy and do not understand the role of the senior leadership team. Middle leaders spoke about a 'them' and 'us' culture and the emphasis being much on control by senior leaders.

'...middle leaders are experts in their department areas so if we were consulted I think it would help because we would all bring our expertise...' Curriculum Leader A

In one curriculum leader meeting, I observed middle leaders sitting in silence. There was the odd challenge to the senior leadership team from two more vocal middle leaders. There was a clear sense of frustration from both senior leaders, who felt they were consulting and not making any progress, and from middle leaders who felt they were being told what to do. A PowerPoint presentation had been prepared and was presented by a member of senior leadership team during the main part of the meeting. This indicated the final decision had already been made as the expected outcome was shown on the slides. It was interesting to note a copy of this presentation was not supplied for middle leaders to look at

beforehand. When a middle leader brought this point up during the meeting, the response was it would be emailed out with the minutes after the meeting. This further confirmed there was no room for negotiation on the decision had already been made and was contained in the slides.

Middle leaders attended one meeting believing they were going to be consulted on the curriculum for the new academic year but it became apparent this had already been discussed at a senior leadership team meeting and a decision had already been made. This meeting was to let middle leaders know what the curriculum plans were. The sense of frustration and upset was strong and Curriculum Leader A typifies this below:-

'...it was a case of well we've discussed this at SLT and we've thrashed it and this is what we think and this is what we're going with and there was no sort of leeway...I know (name of a Curriculum Leader) mentioned is there any leeway and it was much batted down and sort of no this is the way it is and this is what we want to do...' Curriculum Leader A

Another theme emerged was trust and openness between middle and senior leaders. Senior leaders in School A allowing middle leaders to recognise and share each other's expertise will encourage trust, sharing and learning. If school leaders in School A are to involve middle leaders in whole school decision making then this will rest on the level of trust; 'without trust, communication becomes constrained and distorted, thus making problems more difficult to resolve' (Tschannen-Moran, 2007, p99).

Middle and senior leaders in School A may not wish to share information with others. They may fear this information may be used against them or to their disadvantage (Raes *et al*, 2011). If trust can be built through continued interaction then this will encourage a more open working and honest relationship between middle and senior leaders in School A. If senior leaders in school A can recognise their mental models then they may be able to get middle and senior leaders to think more about this default behaviour more implicitly. They need to explore their leadership strategies and think about situations where these strategies are not the best way to handle the situations.

There is little consistent interaction and building relationships that can be seen outside of departments that are spontaneous and instigated at the personal wish of the individual.

'...I've had curriculum leaders who have come to be when they have had a problem and want to discuss something but unless we are directly working together I can probably say no...' Curriculum Leader D

Lack of trust is what makes it co-operation in School A as opposed to collegiality. People will not take risks without trust (Serva *et al*, 2005) and this appears to be the case with middle leaders.

'...Inherently you are accountable to the headteacher and their neck on the block and the headteacher will hold you to account with your results...' Curriculum Leader C

Trust is indicative when people feel able to share things (Halverson, 2007) and this is not the case for middle and senior leaders in School A. This may be why middle leaders do not speak in meetings and remain quiet either through fear or lack of trust as to what will happen because of speaking up against the senior leaders. They feel they are not able to influence the decisions (Seashore-Lewis *et al*, 2009). Middle leaders need to feel supported and valued by their middle leaders colleagues and it is difficult to do this if there is a competition and balkanisation agenda. As trusts develops the balkanisation appears to lessen (Blasé and Blasé, 1999)

Bottery (2003b) refers to the idea of 'practice trust'. This is where a person builds their personal knowledge of a person and wants to maintain this relationship on a personal as well as a professional basis. This is prevented in School A due to the balkanisation and culture of competition between middle and senior leaders. Practice trust becomes stronger through more use and dissipates through lack of use.

Trust is evidenced if it involves people working outside of their official designated roles. There is little evidence of this in School A and roles and hierarchy appear to be central however senior leaders want middle leaders to work beyond their official job role. Senior leaders, through contrived collegiality, are not showing great levels of trust of their middle leaders.

'...I think they discuss it between themselves at senior leadership team meetings and then we get told on a need to know basis...' Curriculum leader A

This is not something which can be enforced on people and made part of the job description, as the senior leaders appear to be doing in School A, it is rooted in relationships and trust and this is a barrier in School A.

There is evidence of managerial control (Johnson, 2003) and it does not appear to lead to sustained change or improvement.

'...I can fill my you know...early closures for the next two years without dictation from the SLT about what I need to do in my department...' Curriculum Leader B

Senge's (1990) thoughts on mental models for senior leaders of how to 'lead' may come into play here. They may not be aware of they are using their mental model of how they should think and behave as it is tacit knowledge. These are built up over time and senior leaders may not be aware they are unwittingly making decisions on behalf of their middle leaders. Senior leaders may be trying to do something different to what their ingrained mental model is telling them is the 'right thing to do'.

'...you have to build in the time to consult the staff...and you have to build in the time to consult everybody to get feedback and make the adaptation and feedback to the strategy or policy and then take it back to everybody again and just doesn't happen here ...' Curriculum Leader B

The culture of the school appears to be the middle leaders and senior leaders attend meetings as one of the rituals and they attend meetings under the guise of collaboration but in practice, they are pushing their own departments and agendas. This appears to resonate with Sergiovanni's (2004, p52) thinking they are being 'robotically brought together for some forced reason'.

This appears to be the case at School A where senior leaders are happy to hand over but still retain control.

'...curriculum leader meetings which are quite regular, once a month...which is quite a lot and they get opportunity looking at the school development plan to have some say as to what the agenda will be at those meetings...they're asked to address whole school issues within...at the last curriculum leaders meeting was myself and (name) the SENCO talking about the role of the SENCO and it didn't work out as well as we have wanted it to and there needs to be a follow up...and the idea was curriculum leaders got some SAY into how they wanted the role of the TA to develop rather than just accepting what the ECM (Every Child Matters) agenda suggests and what the SENCO decided was the role of the TA...' Senior Leader Z

For collaborative whole school decision making to take place there has to be a change in the 'way we do things around here' in School A (Harris and Lambert, 2003, p14).

Middle leaders feel senior leaders do not have much belief in their abilities. However, senior leaders claim they do believe in their middle leadership team and feel there is a lot of talent for them to use to drive initiatives forward and develop the school further. This appears to come across more in verbal interviews than it does in the documentary analysis and observations.

Middle leaders feel meetings are considered more as routines to be followed by senior leaders in School A as opposed to genuine outcomes from discussion which reinforces middle leader feelings these meetings are a waste of their time and not productive.

'...I mean if we need curriculum leader meetings then we need a good solid agenda...and sometimes I feel like we don't do much at our curriculum leader meetings...sit down and have a chat...or a rant...or an argument like last time...it's just unbelievable...I mean was just an hour of my life I'm just not going to back again. The meetings don't do anything though do they? They didn't achieve anything. So I have made my views about meeting clear about how I thought it was a waste of time...' Curriculum Leader B

I observed a few curriculum leader meetings and in all of them, there was much talking by members of senior leadership team and much listening by middle leaders. In one meeting, I observed the headteacher talking about his desire to ask middle leaders how to move forward in terms of middle leader input and engagement in the middle leaders meetings. Following another flashpoint during the meeting, where a small number of irate middle leaders seemed to derail the meeting and the agenda, after asking middle leaders what they wanted to move this forward, he then gave each middle leader a piece of paper saying this is how we are going to try and move forward. This appeared to alienate middle leaders more. It would appear the systems in terms of a regular meeting time for middle leaders and a place to meet are in place for whole school decision-making but these are not perceived to be effective.

'...we are trying to be more consultative and try and involve more of them rather than an 'information giving' session and 'what's happening' exercise and they can respond on...' Senior Leader Y

'...what people would have once gone to had an idea, presented it formally and there might have been some discussion afterwards and SLT have taken a step back and said we are looking for ideas and have gone with the issue and said 'let's address this how can we best do it...?' Senior Leader Y

If misguided distributed leadership is enabled in a school then it can lead to coercion, or delegation, if implemented from a top-down perspective (Hatcher, 2005). The data show middle leaders would like more opportunities to take part in consultation with senior leaders but if it is genuine and not as contrived as they believe it to be now. Middle leaders appeared to be distrustful of senior leader efforts to share leadership with them and they did not believe it to be genuine which matches what Hargreaves (1994) terms 'contrived collegiality'. When asked about collegiality, in the context of a discussion about working together to move the school forward, middle leaders do not believe collegiality to be strong between themselves and other middle leaders in School A or with senior leaders.

'...well it is an ideal world isn't it...and an ideology I suppose...it's just about whether you've got the kind of measures to implement something like because of the nature of our job things do often go by the wayside...' Curriculum Leader B

They give examples of when collegiality between middle leaders was started but then fell by the wayside as part of the leadership forum meetings.

'...the discussion group was a bit of a joke and I don't really think although was laid out as what middle leaders wanted...some middle leaders wanted...and was going to be the way it was going to be done...wasn't the right way...there are other things are discussed properly but the word discussion is a moot point because discussion doesn't necessarily mean involvement...' Curriculum Leader D

Middle leaders say they are willing to support whole school decision-making as long as they do not perceive it to be contrived and their middle leader peers and senior leadership team consider their thoughts.

'...I would be involved in whole school decision-making if I genuinely thought my opinion was going to be taken into account or valued but I don't think they always are. It's just a case of consulting for the sake of consulting...' Curriculum Leader A

Middle leaders in School A appear to resent some of the senior leaders' ideas as they feel they have to implement decisions they have not been a part of or had any input into. This links back to Raes *et al's* (2011) theory on strategy implementers and formulators in the roles are clear in School A to an outsider. Middle leaders feel demotivated and disaffected when decisions have been made and they have been excluded from discussions they feel they should be a part of.

'...I think if you go and work in a place where you think you have no real control over what happens or decisions are made then I think fundamentally you've got less interest in what you are doing. So, yeah, I think kind of feeling of involvement is terribly important...' Curriculum Leader B

Middle leaders feel they do need to be involved in prior discussions with whole school initiatives they are being asked to implement. They feel they need to have more time to think about initiatives beforehand to make better decisions.

'...I think it's important middle leaders are aware of the thinking behind a lot of things because I think it shapes you in a different way of thinking and spreading it down to others in your department because sometimes they are asking you questions you haven't thought of because you haven't seen all the options either...and maybe you would approach it in a different way a different style to people if you were involved in the whole concept of everything...rather than just on the receiving end of it. So then it's not an abstract thing you are trying to explain to people. I think the more involved you are it's going to be beneficial...sometimes there can be grey areas in what you are trying to do and it helps to have an overview...' Curriculum Leader C

In some cases, middle leaders wish to be seen to be collaborating with their middle leader peers but in practice what they were saying in interviews was they preferred to work in their departments with their own teams.

Middle leaders are asked to implement things but when they raise implementation issues, these tend to be left unresolved by senior leaders as the meeting comes to an end, which leaves some middle leaders frustrated. Middle leaders feel if they had a say then the quality of decisions would be better and easier to implement on their part.

'...I think it would be really interesting to go to SLT meetings and get involved in what they talk about. I think there are people who could make some really useful contributions in terms of ideas as to how to do things and I think they would benefit from it. I think a breath of fresh air in there sometimes...some fresh ideas yeah...' Curriculum Leader B

'...I would like to have a say in what is happening in the whole school because ultimately it is going to be us who is going to have to implement it...' Curriculum Leader D

There seems to be a resistance to implementing ideas middle leaders feel may not be the best ones to implement. Resistance is a way they feel they can exercise their power to block or veto decisions if they feel it necessary not to carry out instructions from senior leaders (Poultney, 2007).

'...and I think, sometimes, we asked to do things require a hell of a lot of effort but don't have much impact at all. So those things I try and minimise and I try and focus on some things are going to raise pupil's attainment or get the results up in the department...' Curriculum Leader B

Although there is a competition rather than collaboration agenda in School A, middle and senior leaders in School A do share knowledge but this appears to be in the emergent stages of their everyday practice. For real innovation in terms of collaborative whole school decision-making, the emergent practice has to go beyond the superficial and into sharing the knowledge arises from this interaction in School A. 'Knowledge transfer occurs when the communicated 'know-how' and the 'know-why' is converted into the 'know-how', the actionable knowledge know belongs to recipient' (Hargreaves 2003, p9).

Care must be taken the leaders in School A do not assume all forms of collaboration between middle and senior leaders are equally beneficial and help to develop whole school decision making in School A. Little (1990) distinguished between different kinds of collegial relations. In her model she identifies storytelling and scanning; sharing and aid and assistance as all involving teachers working together but with little impact. In School A, it would appear the curriculum leader meetings do not go beyond storytelling to develop across the model to the independence level. There is little evidence of joint work so the impact of collaboration is rarely seen. Little (1990) defines joint work as when teachers have a shared responsibility for work and it involves collective action. In School A, middle and senior leaders may wish to explore how they can move into 'joint work' in terms of shared decision making to make it collaborative as opposed to simply interacting at a very basic level.

A community of practice is formed when all are working towards the same activities and learn about each other and the job as to how to achieve their main goals. This appears not to be the case in School A with middle and senior leaders having difference priorities. Communities of practice are developed through relationships and not through roles and hierarchies. It is relationship built over time and not through roles and structure that create a community of practice. In School A there is an emphasis on balkanisation, hierarchy and

roles and titles and this should diminish over time in a community of practice. While most staff will support collaborative working, some will be more committed than others with different levels of participation and involvement. There is a concern there are too many middle leaders to make consultation realistic.

'...it is quite clear in the curriculum leader meetings there are two or three people have the most to say and to be honest we just quarrel...' Curriculum Leader D

If leaders can join up their leadership style, skills, knowledge and values to change the context then there is more chance of success (Dimmock, 2012). Another welcome aspect of collaboration for School A could be breaking down traditional subject barriers which inhibit sharing of expertise between subject areas.

'...everybody would bring their own little area of expertise along and share good practice and we would want to get involved as we would be sharing it rather than just being told what to do and hopefully we add some of our own ideas in there we might want to lead the change and be a bit more motivated about it...' Curriculum Leader A

Collaboration may help middle leaders feel part of a larger network (Jones, 2009). They will have access to instant professional development through learning conversations with colleagues through collaboration and interaction (Dimmock, 2012). Kelchtermans (2011) points out collaboration tends to go deeper than practical problem solving to avoid a discussion about beliefs and identity which is why I feel middle leaders feel they are not involved in any meaningful discussion in School A. There is evidence there is no real meaningful working relationships between middle leaders and senior leaders.

'...I have asked curriculum leaders to do a (subject) audit and was the first time I spoke to them all...' Curriculum Leader D

One way School A could work together more is through forming a community of practice. There are claims teachers who are involved in a wider school perspective have a common sense of purpose (Brown and Rutherford, 1996). If middle leaders in School A begin to feel they are more empowered then they may be more open to seeing different perspectives and have dialogue to try and address differences (Hannay *et al*, 2001). Communities of mind are where middle leaders in School A feel listened to and their views are taken seriously. Do they try to avoid conflict or do they discuss problems and look for solutions? This is the biggest challenge for School A, acknowledging differences, wanting to learn

from them and working for closer agreement (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1998). Therefore, a community of practice between middle and senior leaders engaged in whole school decision making in School A will not appear instantly. It will need time to form and develop for middle and senior leaders to think, learn, and talk together (Lieberman and Miller, 2008). In School A, community of place is meetings are welcoming for middle and senior leaders and they have space to gather. Middle and senior leaders must not be made to feel some information is off limits to them. Community of friendship is where relationships are built through informal contact and not contacting each other when they are scheduled to meet or there is a problem. Therefore, the success of communities of practice is rooted in relationships and interactions not processes (Lieberman and Miller, 2008).

Hierarchy

There is evidence of an emphasis on hierarchy in School A with the preference of a senior leadership in charge with middle leaders accountable for their own departments. There appear to be signs of strong affiliation to departments and weak links to the whole school (Bryk and Schneider, 2003; Fitzgerald and Gunter, 2008). This may explain why middle leaders in School A prefer to think of senior leaders as holding all the power and why they prefer the current balkanised set up as opposed to what state in interviews. In School A senior leaders with hierarchical authority are often deferred to by others which affects collaborative work (Hammersley-Fletcher, 2005).

'...I think a lot of things I do are sent down from SLT (senior leadership team) and I implement them...' Curriculum Leader A

Some middle leaders in School A appear to only complete the minimum in terms of their work as a middle leader and do not wish to get involved beyond their department. There was an indication from one middle leader there a number of them who do not wish to do more than the minimum required. Middle leaders spoke about a 'them' and 'us' culture and the emphasis being very much on control by senior leaders. There is evidence that the skills resource is untapped at middle leader level in School A (Torrington and Weightman, 1989).

Power and control, in terms of decisions made and overall direction of the school, very much remains with the senior leadership team and they appear reluctant to relinquish this which middle leaders feel restricts their development. Hierarchy is important in School A to allow middle and senior leaders to structure work and ensure it is completed

(Chenoweth, 2009) albeit this is in individual department format rather than a collective team. However, there is some evidence in the literature that hierarchy is helpful for task completion but not for building effective relationships (Pearce and Conger, 2003; Thorpe *et al*, 2011).

Analysis of line management agendas shows a common agenda, irrespective of subject area, which all curriculum leaders adhere to. These contain priorities that need to be discussed, with the minutes being sent to the senior leadership team, to show the items on the agenda have been discussed. Power is evident from observations of curriculum leader meetings where items discussed appear to have been discussed before being brought to the attention of middle leaders. Items are not discussed but are simply given as actions for middle leaders to carry out. Meetings observed tended to be more about information giving rather than open discussions. The headteacher chaired the meeting and distributed a plan of what he wanted the focus to be for each meeting. Senior leaders who were responsible for each area of the plan, in turn, then explained what they wanted to happen in departments to support the whole school initiative. The headteacher and senior leaders, with curriculum leaders listening, led the vast majority of this meeting. It would appear senior leaders are keen to talk about an open and collaborative decision making culture at School A but observations showed otherwise. There could be an argument that as they have systems in place for compliance and accountability there is little need for senior leaders in School A to develop trust and relationships with middle leaders and there is little incentive for them to do this as they know middle leaders will comply (Hatcher 2005). It would appear that School A is dictating change rather than ‘orchestrating’ through a community of practice (Harris and Lambert, 2003).

The interview data and observations showed senior leaders inform middle leaders of initiatives as opposed to consulting with them via the leadership forum. This resulted in a small body of middle leaders who feel ‘they are dictated to’.

‘...I think what they see as consultation and when we go to curriculum leader we see it as something else...as being perhaps told what to do. It’s not intended...it’s the way it comes across sometimes...’ Curriculum Leader C

Capacity Building

Harris and Lambert (2003) define capacity as opportunities for people to work together in a new way. This definition was chosen for this study as it provides a very clear direction for leadership to be harnessed in School A through building relationships and to move the

school forward by involving leadership at all levels as opposed to just at senior level. Crucially, this definition also makes clear the link between capacity building and relationships and that middle leaders need to possess relevant skills and abilities to do the job that is required of them rather than instigating structural changes such as meetings and changes in titles.

Stoll and Bolam (2005) argue three elements are necessary to build capacity and these are structure, conditions, and culture. The first element is creating suitable conditions for people to work together. Currently, School A is trying to do new things but within the same working format of the meetings. The rigid structure of the meetings and not having clear feedback loops is not helping to build capacity or allow middle and senior leaders to work together. The culture of School A is very much embedded and will always take precedence and this need to be altered before any leadership capacity may be allowed to build. If this new way of working goes against the belief, values and assumptions of middle and senior leaders then it will not work. People across the school have to accept this new level of leadership (Macbeath, 2005) and this will be challenging as the structures which operate already are deeply embedded within the school culture. Leaders need to create conditions for leadership capacity to be built, and they may even need to take account of the capacity that already exists and use this as a basis to build more capacity (Hatch, 2001).

Change and the subsequent management of change appear to be a great source of conflict and creating different priorities between middle and senior leaders within School A and capacity building between middle and senior leaders is not yet viewed as a strength or a priority. Senior leaders perceive their leadership of change is adequately embedded and that change can be easily managed and implemented. Middle leaders feel that it is contrived change that is enforced on them to which they have not been able to contribute to. One middle leader typifies their thinking by saying that the senior leaders have already discussed initiatives and made a decision before it reaches the middle leaders. This could be an indication that senior leaders are not confident about middle leaders' abilities to make strategic decisions. It may also be because the headteacher and the senior leaders are very aware of their external accountability. Middle leaders make it clear that they are happy to take part in initiatives and decision-making but they are not as comfortable accepting the accountability that comes with it.

Senior leaders in School A are clear as to why they wish to build leadership.

'...in the last five months or so...there has been a real insecurity and a need to be able to 'drag the whole school forward...' Senior Leader Z

'...I think...we have realised in SLT that there is a capacity issue that traditionally thinking that the SLT will lead...' Senior Leader Y

If capacity building had been evident then middle leaders may have been more comfortable making decisions and senior leaders would show more trust in their middle leaders' abilities. Senior leaders, through their actions, appear not to be comfortable with giving middle leaders the freedom to make decisions for which the senior leaders will be held accountable.

'...I think sometimes people in middle leadership are going to run off with their own ideas a little bit and....it can create a little bit of discomfort or stress for the SLT...' Senior Leader Z

'...it was frightening to me because it was my framework....and here I am...handing over to curriculum leaders...and for them to be able to input into that and that frightened me did that...' Senior Leader Y

The lack of freedom is something the middle leaders have also commented on during the interviews that highlights the difference between middle and senior leader thinking.

'...sometimes it's a bit frustrating like too much direction and I feel like I am experienced enough to know what to do in terms of planning and my department and it's just having time to get on with it really...' Curriculum Leader B

When analysing whether School A has enabled and sustained teachers to learn and improve outcomes. There was little evidence from senior leaders that they were attempting to build middle leadership capacity through training. However, they were keen to say they believed that middle leaders were being given opportunities to take part and this was something they were aware of doing more.

'...certainly an openness to middle leaders to get involved in greater things...' Senior Leader Z

The data show that senior leaders are keen to involve middle leaders, and this can be seen through observation and scrutinising minutes of curriculum leader meetings. They say they feel middle leaders should be involved and can identify how but senior leaders appear not

to have taken the foundation steps of preparing middle leaders for this task to enable them to be effective and comfortable with it.

'...a middle leader I would suggest is someone who looks longer term someone who plans ahead and shares things someone who is a bit more, well not a bit more, proactive as opposed to reactive to things to things around them and maybe someone who is pulling things together and sort of sees that bigger picture...'
Curriculum Leader Z

Middle leaders mentioned subject leader standards but there was no mention of any other types of training, leadership training, to build their capacity. Middle leaders say that the training they had received was to develop their classroom practice as opposed to their leadership capabilities. One middle leader talked about carrying out 'Leading from the Middle' training and said it was not beneficial at all. This is typified by the following quote:-

'...was that middle leader training...I think it was...well they didn't tell me anything I didn't already know...' *Curriculum Leader B*

It appears training senior leaders are providing, in an attempt to build skills and capacity at a middle leader level, is not considered useful and effective by middle leaders. Scrutiny of emails from senior leaders to middle leaders, agendas and minutes of curriculum leader meetings and observation showed middle and senior leaders do have opportunities to work together but this appears not to be perceived as effective. It is causing frustration between middle and senior leaders.

In School A, there is evidence that much of the changes to middle leadership appears to have come from structural changes, such as dissolving the 'subject leader' level in the hierarchy and making all subject leaders into 'curriculum leaders'. There is also evidence of changes in titles of middle leaders rather than any meaningful capacity building to enable this change in structure and titles to have any impact other than just simple changes at a basic level.

Stoll and Bolam (2005) argue there are three elements to build capacity. When analysing School A through this model it would appear senior leaders are working to try and create the conditions and structure for sharing leadership with middle leaders. This can be seen in the agenda items on the curriculum leader meetings and through discussions they have with them. However, they appear to be going against the tacit agreement within the school

culture, as perceived by the middle leaders, that they work within their own departments. Therefore, this is emerging practice and not embedded or effective.

Senior leaders are trying to build opportunities to share experiences and opportunities with middle leaders but then take over this time by being prescriptive within curriculum leader meetings rather than allowing conversations to develop and also practice to develop. There is also little evidence of developing and building interrelationships between the senior and middle leadership team and this can be observed in curriculum leader meetings where middle and senior leaders appear to be two different groups. The hierarchy is clear and appears to be enforced.

'...It's moving away from the culture of...I think in some school traditionally...the senior leadership team have made all the decisions and told people what to do and I think that, that is a real danger...a real danger...we are your parents and you are our children...you know we have and are slowly moving away from that...' Senior Leader Z

Middle leaders in School A may need to accept that their leadership may now involve a whole school perspective as opposed to a departmental one. They may have to think about the conflict of what is good for the whole school against their loyalty to their individual departments. Senior leaders fear of handing over could be due to external accountabilities. There is also little time to spend on developing capacity. Senior leaders appear to prefer the tried and test methods whereas middle leaders seem not to be open to trying new ways of working. Senior and middle leaders should explore current practice and try to enhance it. A middle leader perspective on how to improve the quality of decision-making might help senior leaders.

'...some of the better curriculum leaders meetings have involved people working together and looking at issues rather than 'this is how we are doing it...' Senior Leader Y

It is evident that middle leaders do not always agree with senior leaders when they choose priorities to focus on.

'...they get the opportunity to have some say as to what the agenda will be at those meetings...' Senior Leader Y

Senior leaders may wish to spend more time developing a team to allow capacity to develop as per the literature seems to be hinting. It would help to establish meaningful

routines to allow interaction to take place to stop the meetings being perceived as ineffective by middle leaders.

'...I feel like we don't do much at our curriculum leader meetings...sit down and have a chat...or a rant...or an argument...like last time...it's just unbelievable...I mean that was just an hour of my life that I'm just not going to back again. The meetings don't do anything though do they? They didn't achieve anything. So I have made my views about that meeting clear about how I thought it was a waste of time...' Curriculum Leader B

It appears senior leaders in School A feel that interaction of any kind with middle leaders will lead to capacity building and this is not the case. It has to be geared towards building capacity otherwise it will not work. Not all interactions create a professional community and the interaction between middle and senior leaders in School A is not currently creating a community of practice. It appears to be creating conflict and mistrust on the part of middle leaders. Frustration was observed on the part of the senior leaders through observations in Curriculum Leader meetings.

'...at the last curriculum leaders meeting was myself and the SENCO going to curriculum leaders and talking about the role of the SENCO and it didn't work out as well as we have wanted it to and there needs to be a follow up...and the idea was that curriculum leaders got some SAY into how they wanted the role of the TA to develop...' Senior Leader Z

Middle leaders do not feel knowledgeable about decisions that need to be made so they are unable to act on issues raised in curriculum leader meetings. One middle leader indicated more training is needed if middle leaders are going to be asked to work outside of their perceived individual departmental remit then they need to develop capacity to enable success in this new role.

'...we've had a little bit of curriculum leader training but I wouldn't say that I've had a lot of training to do the curriculum leaders job never mind anything else...' Curriculum Leader B

Some middle leaders are very complacent and others more vocal in curriculum leader meetings as the quote below shows. Capacity building may allow them all to want to take part more constructively because they have had necessary training and developed the skills required to be comfortable to take on the task they are being asked to do.

'...It is quite clear in the curriculum leader meetings that there are two or three people that have the most to say and to be honest we just quarrel...' Curriculum Leader D

This chapter has analysed the data through the five themes that emerged from the data. The next chapter will conclude with answering the research questions and some recommendations for School A as to how to move forward.

Chapter 5 - Conclusion and Recommendations

Grounded theory differs from traditional methods as the data is collected before the literature being studied in great depth so themes emerge from and are grounded within the data. Throughout the study, I have tried to remain true to the grounded theory tradition and this has been discussed in detail in the methodology chapter. There has been a detailed explanation of how the data was gathered from interviews and then supplemented with the observation and documentary analysis.

Addressing the Research Areas

The purpose of this study was to illuminate and explore the following research areas for School A:

What does whole school decision making look like in School A?

- 1) What is the middle leader perspective on this?
- 2) What is the senior leader perspective on this?
- 3) What are the ways in which middle and senior leaders can develop existing practice in School A to move collaborative whole school decision making forward?

In this chapter I will reflect on my observations in relation to these three research questions, explore the limitations of this study and make appropriate recommendations for future study.

Grounded theory must 'fit' and 'have grab' and 'work for the people in the study' so they can see the relevance of the theory to their lives (Glaser, 1998). When the participants from School A talked about their role in decision making they seemed to frame these thoughts within five main categories of what was most important to them. These categories emerged as 'balkanization', 'hierarchy', 'job role', 'collaboration', and 'capacity building'. They were underpinned by two overarching concepts of 'relationships' and 'culture'.

There is a link between these concepts and but also an interrelationship. Some of the concepts appeared to be more important to some participants than they were to others. For example, collaboration appeared to be a key theme that emerged from the data but this does not necessarily mean it is the first in importance or the first thing to consider when looking at school decision making in School A. This section will not discuss the themes in a linear fashion but aim to explore the interrelationship between these five concepts and their link to the two main overarching concepts.

Collegiality, sharing and devolving leadership in schools is not something that is going to go away in the future. Therefore, I have tried to develop a study that has explored what the barriers to middle and senior leader working relationships are. I have also taken into account the existing literature, empirical studies and used my own data. However, particularly in School A, there is a need for senior and middle leaders to develop stronger working relationships in order to allow senior leaders to achieve their vision of sharing leadership with middle leaders in practice.

What Does Whole School Decision Making Look Like in School A?

Whole school decision making in School A appears to be led by senior leaders. It appears whole school issues are discussed at senior leadership team meetings. Then these decisions made by senior leaders are cascaded down the hierarchy to middle leaders for implementation. In School A, middle leaders are the implementers of strategy and senior leaders are the formulators of strategy (Raes *et al*, 2011). Senior leaders in School A claim they are involving middle leaders as appropriate and feel they are consulting widely on issues of concern to middle leaders. They feel they are involving middle leaders but indicate they feel there is a reluctance from middle leaders to be involved.

Middle leaders feel that their input is contrived collegiality and is not a genuine consultation for their viewpoint, opinion, or concerns. They feel they are overridden at meetings and that senior leaders are only 'seen' to be consulting with them because it is viewed as the right thing to do. Senior leaders, however, speak confidently about middle leader consultation in whole school issues but their actions appear to be more reflective of having made the final decision and communicating it to middle leaders. This, perhaps, comes across to middle leaders as if they are telling them what they would like them to do in terms of whole school policy as opposed to consulting with them.

What is the Middle Leader Perspective on this?

Middle leaders feel they are solely employed to manage their own subject areas and departments and that whole school issues are the domain of senior leaders. They view themselves as much implementers of strategy as opposed to formulators. They appear to prefer having a leadership hierarchy in School A and, although they prefer to be consulted and have an input in whole school decision making, they indicate that they do not wish to have accountability for whole school level decisions. There is a concern from middle leaders about the increase in workload and additional time it would take to take part in whole school decision-making. Middle leaders do wish to be consulted by senior leaders

and they feel this will help them to explain initiatives better to their departmental colleagues and implement them more effectively. Middle leaders feel contrived collegiality exists between middle and senior leaders in terms of whole school decision-making. The only opportunities for them to meet with senior leaders as a team are via formally scheduled meetings that do not encourage effective collaboration and relationship building to occur.

What is the Senior Leader Perspective on this?

Senior leaders appear to be aware that if they involve middle leaders in whole school decision-making then this may improve and lead to more effective whole school outcomes such as improved pupil grades and meeting externally set data targets for each subject area. They feel ample opportunities are provided for middle leaders during leadership forum meetings to take part in whole school decision making but they feel middle leaders are not as proactive as they could be. Senior leaders indicated that they believe middle and senior leaders are working as a collegial team when it comes to whole school decision-making.

Senior leaders appear not to have taken the school culture, and structures that create the school culture, into consideration and appear to be trying to do something that goes against these. They have created a culture of dependence and reliance within their middle leaders on senior leaders. They have also nurtured and created a hierarchy that emphasises power and status as opposed to collegiality. There is evidence within the data that senior leaders verbally claim to be sharing decision-making but this was not often seen in practice in observations or in documentary analysis such as observations and minutes of meetings.

What are the Ways in Which Middle and Senior Leaders can Develop Existing Practice in School A to move Collaborative Whole School Decision Making Forward?

Middle and senior leaders in School A appear to feel differently about working collaboratively on whole school decision-making. Middle leaders feel any input they have is contrived and senior leaders feel many opportunities are being provided for middle leaders. This links back to the organisational structure and the culture that is being promoted in school A and this is something which senior and middle leaders may wish to explore further. They may wish to develop a more collaborative culture with less emphasis on a hierarchical structure as opposed to one that promotes subject area divisions and discourages interaction between middle leaders and senior leaders.

Trust and relationship building appear to be key in allowing middle and senior leaders to develop a good working relationship and work collaboratively. Distributing leadership in School A is a possible model to help to move collaborative whole school decision making forward. Further clarity in terms of what the middle leaders' role is will assist with collaborative whole school decision making, as middle leaders appear to be very uncertain at the time of writing as to what their input should be. Middle leaders may need to consciously become less balkanised in their way of working and senior leaders may wish to create more genuine opportunities to allow middle leaders to take part in whole school decision-making. A community of practice could be built of middle and senior leaders with very clear role emphasised, with clear expectations of the input required and resulting accountability. Leadership needs to be shared with middle leaders using a leadership model that fits in with the current hierarchical and cultural set up of School A.

Link to overarching concepts of Participant Relationships and Culture

Developing relationships between participants in School A are pivotal if effective shared decision making is to take place. Without a good working relationship underpinned by mutual trust, genuine collaboration, interaction, communication, and teamwork senior and middle leaders will be unable to work together which will result in balkanization. It is not necessary for effective and efficient working relationships to be in place before middle and senior leaders begin working together in School A (Harris and Lambert 2003). An effective working relationships may be something that middle and senior leaders aim for and allow to gradually develop over time in the process of their shared work in School A.

The quality of the working relationship built is more important in terms of being able to work collegially together to move School A forward than skills, personal characteristics and ability alone. This relationship will be a critical foundation to building a community of practice (Hart, 1990). Harris and Lambert (2003, p91) suggest relationships 'are fostered by personal conversations, frequent dialogue, shared work, and shared responsibilities'. This is why relationship building is central to collegiality and capacity building as this relationship develops through quality teamwork and meaningful interaction. If the relationship between middle and senior leaders in School A is effective, then there may be less isolation and they may work towards eliminating a climate of balkanization. If middle and senior leaders developed a stronger working relationship then middle leaders may not feel the need to link up with their own departments as much as they are doing.

However, it is important to note these relationships will change over time between middle and senior leaders, increased conflict may arise as they begin to work together in more meaningful shared decision-making (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001).

However, it is no easy task to build relationships in schools as teachers' generally tend to work in a culture of autonomous privacy and relationship building can challenge this. (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001) advise teachers may feel they are being asked to do something their peers may not be happy about and dealing with resistance goes against the idea of building collegiality. They suggest one way of overcoming this is by being clear about roles and exploring how the new proposed model fits within the existing school culture. Hargreaves and Fullan (1998) suggest priority is placed on 're-culturing the school' as opposed to restructuring to engage people to work together better and more collaboratively. They suggest attention is given to 'emotional management' (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1998, p 119) and this is essentially about the working relationships. Evidence suggests that where communities of practice, collegiality, and capacity building exist then this may result in improved organisational outcomes (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001; Wenger, 2006; Raelin, 2008; Devecchi and Rouse, 2010; Datnow, 2011).

Reflecting on Experience of Grounded Theory

When choosing a methodology, I explored grounded theory and liked Glaser's ideas because of the flexibility it gave me to research my own topic in my own school. I wished to choose a methodology that would allow me to generate a grounded theory that could be implemented by senior leaders in School A. As I did not do any prior reading around this topic before starting it, I initially believed that the phenomenon I was investigating was distributed leadership but the study quickly turned into decision-making and relationships between middle and senior leaders. I then discovered my research was actually about the working relationships between the middle and senior leadership team in School A. I found I was exploring working relationships and interaction through the lens of whole school decision-making. I later had to make decisions about when to read and introduce empirical studies and literature into my study. Firstly, I read the empirical studies to check my themes were consistent with other studies that had been written and therefore will be accepted by academics in the field. I brought in the literature once the data for the main study was collected and analysed. At this point, I then read around decision-making, collaboration and relationships in detail to find theories and discover what had already been written, which issues were central to these themes and where the gaps in knowledge were. I did come to this study with a small amount of general prior knowledge but I did not impose it on my data by choosing a specific theoretical focus before the data was collected.

As the ideas began to emerge from the data, I started to think about which empirical studies and theoretical concepts were familiar which could be used to inform this study. I was then able to identify which themes and concepts needed to be further researched to improve rigour when analysing my data and the subsequent memoing. The literature and empirical studies were then used to check which of them resonated most with the memoing and any gaps led to exploring theories I was unfamiliar with. This is when I became familiar with leader member exchange theories, which were unfamiliar to me before data collection. The theoretical literature and empirical studies were accessed as and when necessary throughout the life of the study to draw conclusions and justify what my data was telling me as concepts and codes emerged.

In grounded theory, there is a need to start gathering the data almost immediately to see what emerges from the participants rather than aim to meticulously plan the project (Heath and Cowley, 2004). Glaser (1998) advocates the idea that themes emerge from the data and selection to fit preconceived ideas is to be avoided. He argues that categories must be refitted accordingly as new data emerges and care must be taken that it is emerging and not being forced into categories. Strauss and Corbin (1998) ask questions about what might be in the data whereas Glaser's (1998) emphasises what is already within the data. Glaser advocates that all data is acceptable but the main data must come verbally from the participants themselves and that personal knowledge and experience must be viewed as additional rather than central material.

Glaser and Strauss both agreed there is a place for theoretical literature but both thought it was different places within a grounded theory study. Glaser (1978) claims the literature should be introduced once the categories are stable and reading should be wide to alert to possibilities which may emerge. Strauss (1978) claims that the literature and the researcher's own knowledge can be used early and is an indicator of sensitivity, and can be used to generate hypotheses. However, a criticism is that if a researcher identifies and shapes their own hypotheses and preconceptions then they may well move away from the participants concerns (Heath and Cowley, 2004). The researcher should try to remain focused on the individual interpretations and meanings of the people in the social world being studied and the theory should be allowed to emerge from the data (Matavire and Brown, 2013).

Glaser (1998) suggests researchers put aside the anxiety of doing the research right and discover which individual approach helps them to achieve a balance and interpret the data in the best way to help them to produce a grounded theory.

Glaser's (1978) process for grounded theory is as follows. You start with a general problem area as opposed to a hypothesis with an open attitude for concepts to emerge in this area from the data (Matavire and Brown, 2013). The data is then collected and categories are allowed to emerge from constant comparison. Incidents are compared to incidents across the dataset to allow concepts to emerge and these are then collected together to form categories. The core category then emerges and holds all the other sub concepts together making it the cornerstone of the study (Lars-Johan, 2011). The incoming data is then more closely matched with the core category and the categories are then considered as to how they are related by writing theoretical memos. These are then sorted into a theoretical outline and weaving in the theoretical description with the literature on the topic begins.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) advocated a grounded theory should be both useful and increase understanding in the area under research and this was important in this study that the findings were relevant to my participants and to School A. However, this does raise some issues of credibility and accuracy (Lars-Johan, 2011). Glaser (1998) suggested fit, workability, relevance, and modifiability as criteria for grounded theory to be considered credible for participants. Fit is a term for whether the concepts which emerged actually describe the patterns in the data and this is done through comparing the existing category constantly with the new data is collected. Workability occurs when the concepts closely match the main concerns of the participants. Relevance is whether the theory is applicable and relevant in the eyes of the participants. Modifiability is believing that the theory is never considered as being 'wrong' but is modified over time to create fit, relevant and workability.

It is necessary to work with on-going confusion in grounded theory. There were times in the research when I first collected the data I did not know where the research was going to take me or which themes were going to emerge. There is a need for an awareness not to force the data and work with the idea there is no prior knowledge. It is difficult to trust the data will produce the findings as long as Glaser's (1998) approach is followed. I had to adapt Glaser's approach to my own study and find a way through starting and carrying out the research and seeing where it led me rather than following carefully planned procedures and testing hypotheses to orientate the research. Data analysis can be challenging when it is not always clear what should be emerging from the data and not being clear on the best way to analyse it. It is challenging to then start to crystallise and conceptualise a grounded theory from the data. Grounded theory is a loose way of researching and not as structured and ordered in comparison to other qualitative methods.

This research has made a contribution to knowledge as it has illuminated a snapshot of factors that affect the working relationships between middle and senior leaders in School A. It has highlighted why middle and senior leaders in School A may behave as they do when carrying out joint decision-making. The findings are of relevance to practitioners. When exploring this theme at the early stages of the research, I discovered that there are not many empirical studies that specifically explore the factors that affect the quality of exchange between middle and senior leaders in terms of decision-making and this is a gap this study contributes knowledge to fill. This research has highlighted that the data shows that School A is working in a balkanised and transactional culture as opposed to a transformational and collaborative culture as suggested by current policy and leadership training. This study has also contributed to methodology and the process and methods of carrying out grounded theory research. It describes Glaser's (1998) process of carrying out a grounded theory study and how this was developed and adapted to make it my own. The thesis details how I coded the data and used memoing to ensure that the concepts could be traced back to the data, how I developed the concepts and organised these to develop and produce the grounded theory.

Limitations of this Study

Exploring leadership in schools is challenging as most of this behaviour is embedded within tacit practice and it is not always possible for leaders to explain why they are doing what they are doing. Leadership of a school is dependent on school culture that is a large area to focus on. It is a concern whether a true account can be provided due to the many factors that influence but I have tried to triangulate to validate the evidence.

A key aspect of grounded theory is being able to spend quality time in the field and as an insider researcher, I was able to spend time in the field and observe and make sense of how things worked for myself. I was also able to spend time with the participants from School A outside of dedicated interview time although there may have been some researcher impact I do not think it would have been as strong as had it been an outsider researcher. It assisted me to build good research relationships in terms of gaining access to the participants. Being an insider researcher will have had a negative impact, whilst allowing me access and to understand things better, as it can be argued I may have missed things or focused on things that are important to me. As the themes for the analysis is grounded in the data, which was triangulated, I feel I have tried as far as possible to avoid my own influences although they will have impacted on my work. If an outside researcher had gathered the same data as I have for this study, I believe that they would come to the same

conclusions as I have and would have gathered similar interview data from middle and senior leaders in School A.

Grounded theory expects the researcher to enter the field without any prior reading of the literature or preconceptions but this is not always possible or realistic. This posed an issue as I had already studied this topic at Masters Level and wanted to continue with it during my doctoral studies. I avoided literature related to the themes until the data analysis had been carried out and then used theoretical sensitivity and other empirical studies to locate my research and limit any potential bias. There have been very few empirical studies about whole school decision making exploring interaction and working relationships between middle and senior leaders so there was little by way of existing knowledge to cause bias.

Grounded theory can be interpreted in many ways and this needed to be taken into consideration. There is a clear and concise method of collecting the data for grounded theory but beyond this, there is little to show the researcher how to analyse and interpret the data. Grounded theory analysis is time consuming and has no clear plan or method from Glaser (1998). Computer analysis was not used as it is recommended it is more preferable if the researcher collects code from the data manually and then analyses the data themselves, as opposed to using software, to follow the leads that emerge from the data. The interviews and the observations may have potential bias as data collection methods but the documentary evidence is most reliable in terms of bias. These documents were not produced specifically for my research, as the interviews and observations were, they were produced for another purpose entirely, and used within my research.

This is a small-scale study and focused on one school in the North of England. The findings represent a very small sample but the findings contribute to the wider research in this area. This study has allowed me to develop both as a middle leader practitioner and as a researcher. I have experienced doing research while working full time under the awareness that I needed a topic that was going to interest me over a long period of time. I have learnt about different types of methodology and how to select different methods of data collection to answer specific research questions. I have gained a deeper understanding of whole school decision-making in my own workplace and been able to share this with my middle leader peers and with senior leaders in the hope of contributing to improving their practice. I enjoyed speaking to middle and senior leaders in this context.

I have developed a deeper, more critical understanding of sharing leadership in School A and orientated this within existing empirical studies within a wider academic context. A

future recommendation would be extend this research to a much wider group of participants over a longer period of time, and try and compare different schools for similarities and differences but this was not in the scope of this study.

Recommendations for Future Study:-

- Sample other schools to see if similar results arise.
- Extend the research and data collection to a wider sample of leaders from School A to include teachers and pupils.
- To measure the impact of improved shared decision making on pupil outcomes in School A.
- To investigate further how School A can put into place systems to monitor, evaluate and review decision making in School A.

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Appendix 1 - Information Letter to Middle Leaders/Senior Leaders

<p>Nasima Riazat</p> <p>Faculty of Education and Language Studies</p> <p>The Open University</p> <p>Walton Hall</p> <p>Milton Keynes</p> <p>Mk7 6AA</p> <p><i>(Email included on original letter but omitted here as it identifies the School)</i></p>	<p>Dr Jan Moreland</p> <p>PhD Supervisor</p> <p>Faculty of Education and Language Studies</p> <p>The Open University</p> <p>Walton Hall</p> <p>Milton Keynes</p> <p>MK7 6AA</p> <p><u>jpm397@tutor.open.ac.uk</u></p>
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14th September 2009

Thesis Title

Grounded Theory: A Case Study of Whole School Decision-making in a Secondary School in the United Kingdom.

Dear Potential Participant,

I am writing to invite you to take part in a doctoral research project. The project that I am undertaking is concerned with the developing role of secondary middle leaders and their perceived impact on whole school decision-making. You have been chosen as a potential participant as you are either a middle leader or a senior leader working at (School A). I want to learn about your experiences and your personal views on middle leadership within the context of your school. The aim of this letter is to inform you about the project to help you make your decision as to whether you wish to take part, but I very much hope that you will feel able to take part.

What is the Research about?

As you are probably aware, middle leaders and their role in whole school improvement is a growing area of interest, both nationally and academically. The specific role of middle leaders is ever evolving and it is currently at the very heart of the national agenda, particularly for the National College for Teaching and Leadership and the Training and Development Agency for Schools. There is also an increasing trend towards a 'distributed' model of school leadership due to increased accountability, rapid curriculum and socio-political changes over the past few years. This project is a small-scale research, lasting a period of 18 months, and focuses solely on two culturally similar secondary schools. The aim is to explore the concept of middle leadership and distributed leadership from the perspective of middle leaders and senior leaders. The research areas I aim to focus on in the thesis are:-

What does whole school decision-making currently look like in School A?

- 1) What is the middle leader perspective on this?*
- 2) What is the senior leader perspective on this?*
- 3) What are the ways in which middle and senior leaders can develop existing practice to move collaborative whole school decision-making forward?*

If I agree to take part, what will I be asked to do?

- Engage in one or two audiotaped interviews, of approximately an hour, which will be transcribed and anonymised following the interview(s).
- Provide an email address where any queries arising from your interview data after the interview can be clarified should the need for this arise.

During the informal interview, I will ask you to talk about your experiences as a middle leader, or your views as a senior leader at 'School A'. If there are any questions that you would prefer not to answer, please feel free to tell me and we will move on to another question. If, at any time, you would like to stop the interview, you will be able to indicate this and I will end the interview immediately.

What is in it for me if I take part in the Research?

There are no perceived risks associated in taking part in this research. The possible benefits could be an opportunity for you to contribute to growing academic literature within this particular theme of educational leadership. You may contribute to small changes in practice within 'School A' as a result of the findings of this research.

What will happen when the study ends?

At the end of the study, the findings will be published in a doctoral thesis in an anonymised format. You may wish to note that the research findings may be used at a later date to write journal articles which may be published following the completion of the research. A copy of the fully anonymised findings will be given to any interested participants who have specifically requested them once the findings have been verified at the end of the research.

What will happen to the data I provide? What about confidentiality?

All the information I collect will be confidential between us and will only be used in the interest of answering the research questions posed. The research findings will be reported in such a manner that prevents identification of any participant or any person mentioned in the interviews. No reference will be made as to which school any of the participants are based in or to their specific subject area. In the findings, I will refer to the participants as *Middle Leader '1'* or *Senior Leader 'Z'* and no school identifier information will be used to identify the school you work in. Your school's identity will only be known to me and my supervisor for this research project and will not be divulged to other participants or any other third party.

All audio information and anonymised interview transcripts will be stored securely in my possession and will only be kept for the duration of the research. The audiotapes will be destroyed, or returned to you if you so wish, soon after the tape has been transcribed and your identity has been removed from the transcription. At no point will any individual be identified in any published reports resulting from this study. The results and findings will be aggregated in the final thesis and no identifying information will be used to be able to trace the participants or their schools. The information divulged in audio interviews, and related emails, will only be used for the purposes it is collected for. Any information you share with me will not be used in any way against you or shared with any other participants taking part in this study from your school.

Opportunities to withdraw from the Study and have the data collected about me destroyed.

If you decide to participate, you retain the right to withdraw from the project at any time without having to give a reason. Your participation in the interview is voluntary and you may refuse to participate at any time. However, please be aware that withdrawing once the study has commenced could have *serious repercussions for the success of the study* so

please consider your intention to take part carefully. I also reserve the right to withdraw a participant if it is considered appropriate to do so at the time. If this happens, the reasons will be fully explained to the individual(s) affected.

How complaints and comments can be made?

This research project has been fully approved and endorsed by the Open University but if you still have any concerns about being a participant in this research, or you have a complaint about the manner in which the research is conducted, then you may speak to me directly, or you may contact Dr Jan. Moreland, PhD Supervisor for this research, with your comments.

What do I need to do now?

Please read this information letter and be sure you understand its contents before you give your consent to participate. If there is anything you do not understand or you have any questions, please contact me before signing the consent form.

If you have made a firm decision to take part I am extremely grateful to you in advance for your valued input and contribution. Please sign the attached consent form and return it to me so I can register you as a participant in this research study.

Thank you for considering this invitation.

Nasima Riazat *BA (Hons), PGCE, MAEd (Ldrship&Mgt)*

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Thank you for considering participating in this research. I have attached a copy of this consent form for you to look at in your own time. If you agree to participate in this research project, please complete the information below and return the form to me.

I understand that:-

This is a three year project, and in agreeing to participate I understand that I am making a commitment to be interviewed, either once or twice, and give permission for the researcher to email me should any need arise for clarification of the data I have provided.

There is no compulsion for me to take part in this research. If I choose not to take part at a later date, then I can withdraw by informing the researcher. If I choose to withdraw, then I understand that this may have repercussions for the study. Any information that I have provided to date will be destroyed and audio tapes returned to me if I request.

Any information that I give will be solely used for the purposes of this research which may include publications and for no other purpose.

The information that I give may be shared between the researcher, the EdD Supervisor for this research, academics from the Open University during the viva examination or other interested academics who have an interest in the theme of this research project. At the end of the project the findings may potentially be used, in fully anonymised format, for publishing in journals and other related papers.

I am over 18 and I consent to taking part in this research study. I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of this project and my commitments in participating by the researcher. (Circle one)

Yes No

I agree to be interviewed at least once, approximately an hour, for this project and agree to email contact by the researcher, if required, for further clarification after I have been interviewed. (Circle one)

Yes No

I agree to be audio taped during the interview. (Circle one)

Yes No

Participant Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

Date: _____

Preferred Email Contact: _____

Researcher's Signature _____

Date: _____

Appendix 2 - Consent Form for Meeting Observations and Minutes to Middle Leaders/Senior Leaders

<p>Nasima Riazat</p> <p>Faculty of Education and Language Studies</p> <p>The Open University</p> <p>Walton Hall</p> <p>Milton Keynes</p> <p>Mk7 6AA</p> <p><u>n.riazat@pendlevalle.lancs.sch.uk</u></p>	<p>Dr Jan Moreland</p> <p>EdD Supervisor</p> <p>Faculty of Education and Language Studies</p> <p>The Open University</p> <p>Walton Hall</p> <p>Milton Keynes</p> <p>MK7 6AA</p> <p><u>jpm397@tutor.open.ac.uk</u></p>
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13th July 2013

Thesis Title

Grounded Theory: A Case Study of Whole School Decision-making in a Secondary School in the United Kingdom.

I am *happy/not happy** for Nasima Riazat to use the minutes taken of curriculum leader meetings and personal observations she has made during these meetings, from September 2011 up to July 2013, as part the data for her doctoral thesis for the Open University.

Signed _____

Date _____

Appendix 3 – Interview Questions

<i>Proposed Questions and their Relevance to the Focus Questions.</i>	<i>Proposed Research Questions.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Tell me about how you became a middle leader. ➤ Tell me your thoughts about the difference between a middle leader and a middle manager? ➤ Tell me about your role in School A? ➤ Can you give some examples of tasks that you carry out as part of your role? ➤ In your opinion, what are the barriers that stop you from being effective in your role? ➤ What helps and supports you to be effective in your role? Why do you think this is? ➤ In your opinion, do you do what is in your job description? ➤ Tell me about what kind of things feel you have the most influence over as a middle leader? ➤ Tell me of the kinds of things that you feel you have the least influence over? ➤ Which part of your job is the most important to you? ➤ Which is the least important? ➤ In your view, is the role of head of department changing? ➤ Are you aware of the subject leader standards? ➤ Do you feel accountable to your team or to the senior leadership team? ➤ Are there opportunities to meet with other middle leaders? ➤ Do you see any advantages or disadvantages in working with other middle leaders at School A? ➤ Who has the most influence on your decision-making for example students, senior leadership team, your departmental team, governors, parents, other? 	<p><i>1. To what extent do curriculum leaders of core subjects at School A feel they contribute at departmental level?</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What systems are in place for decision-making? 	<p><i>2. To what extent do curriculum leaders</i></p>

- Have you even been involved in the 'whole school vision' for School A?
- Have you been involved in any school improvement planning?
- Have you experienced any strategic decision-making?
- Have you been involved in the creation of whole school policies?
- Have you ever been involved in leading change at the whole school level as opposed to departmental level?
- What does the term 'distributed leadership' mean to you? Where have you heard it?
- How involved do you want to be in whole school decision-making?
- Do you think that the school can improve more with middle leader involvement?
- If you had the chance to attend senior leadership team meetings would you go?
- Do you see strategic leadership as part of your role?
- What does being more involved in whole school issues look like to you?
- Do you feel you work collaboratively with other middle leaders in school A? If this could be developed further, what would it look like to you?
- How much influence do you think you have over whole school issues?
- Do you feel consulted by senior leadership team?
- Do you have the opportunity to contribute to whole school planning?
- Do you feel empowered to make your own decisions or do you feel you faithfully implement policies sent down from senior leadership team?
- Are you a participant in whole school decision-making?
- Do you have common values with other middle leaders?
- Are you consulted on major issues that affect you by senior leadership team?
- Do you think there is more of a link between senior leadership

of core subjects feel they influence at a strategic level, for example, vision, school improvement planning, strategic decision-making, whole school policies and wide school-community relations?

<p>team and school and improvement or middle leaders and school improvement?</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How has ‘Leading from the Middle’ training affected you? ➤ Have you had any middle leader training? ➤ Do you think School A makes the best use of its middle leaders? How do you feel you are used well? What do you think needs to change? ➤ What are your training needs? ➤ What does collegiality look like to you? ➤ Do you think whole school leadership is part of the middle leader’s role? To what extent? ➤ What so you see as the role of the senior leadership team in School A? ➤ If you could do your job better what would help you? ➤ What do you think the middle leader role will entail in 10 years time? ➤ How relevant is the continued professional development (CPD) to your current role? ➤ Do you have access to peer support from other middle leaders? 	<p><i>3. What motivates or de-motivates middle leaders of core subjects to be more involved with leading change at a whole school level rather than just at departmental level.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ What do you think is the difference between a middle leader and a middle manager? ✚ What is the primary role of middle leaders at School A? ✚ Can you give some examples of tasks you expect middle leaders to carry out as part of their role? ✚ What does an effective middle leader look like? ✚ Do you think that the role of the head of department is changing? ✚ Are you aware of the subject leader standards? ✚ Are there opportunities for middle leaders to meet with other middle leaders at School A? ✚ What systems are in place for whole school decision-making for middle leaders? ✚ How involved do you think middle leaders want to be in whole school decision-making? 	<p><i>4. Are there any gaps between the perception of middle leaders and deputy head of teaching and learning, and if so, what steps can be taken to narrow them?</i></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Do you think the school can improve faster with middle leader involvement? ✦ If middle leaders had the chance to attend senior leadership team meetings, on a rota basis, would you welcome them? ✦ Do you see strategic leadership as part of the middle leader's role? ✦ What does middle leaders being more involved in whole school issues look like to you? ✦ Do middle leaders work together collaboratively at School A? Strengths and areas for development? ✦ How much influence do you think middle leaders have with regards to whole school decision-making? ✦ Do you think middle leaders are used effectively at School A? ✦ Do you think whole school decision-making is part of the middle leader's role? ✦ What do you think the middle leader's role will entail in 10 years time? 	
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Appendix 4—Short Sample of a Transcribed Interview with Coding

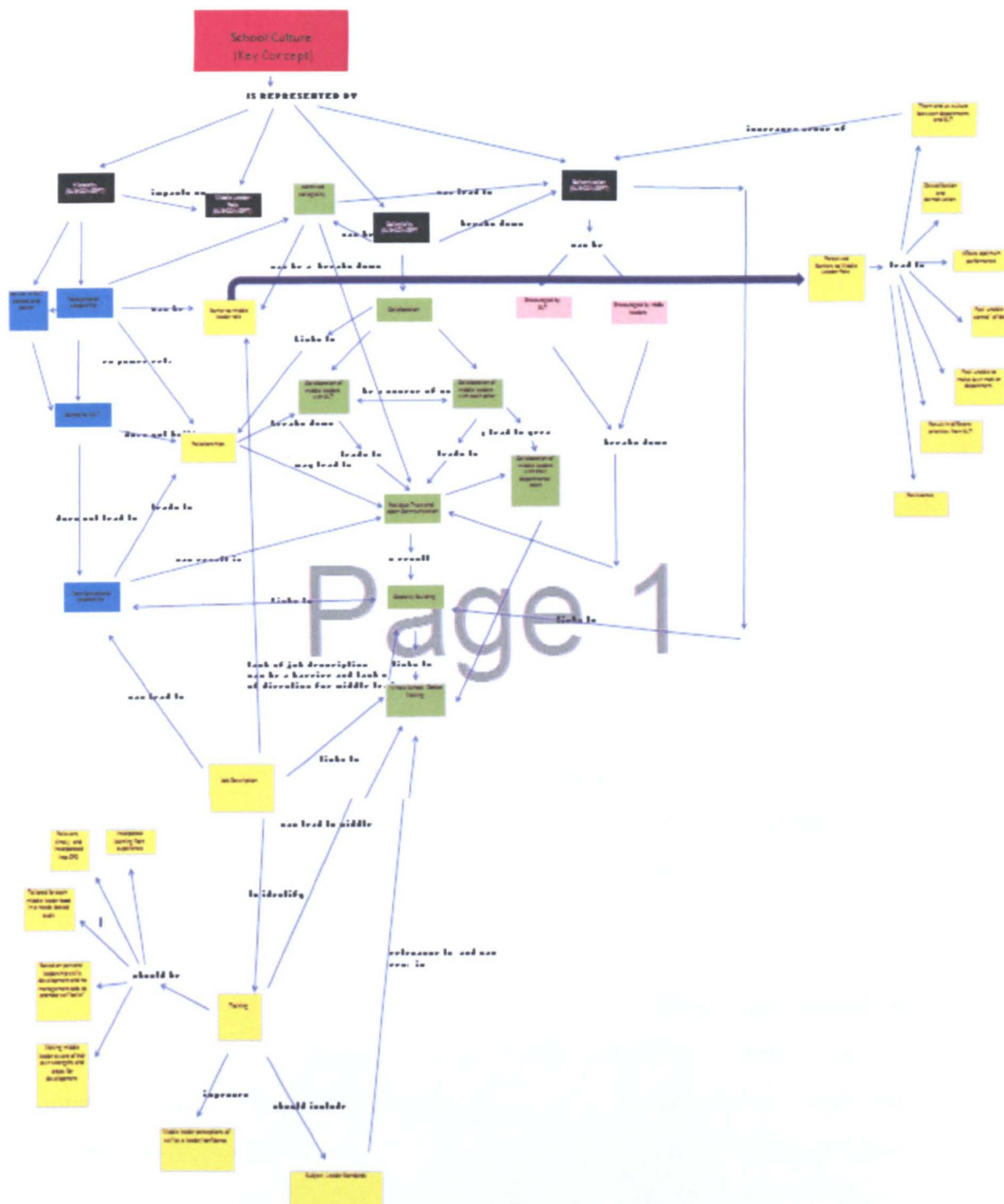
[illegible]

Curriculum Leader B in School A.

[illegible]

Curriculum Leader B in School A.

Appendix 5 - Conceptual Framework Mapping from Interview Data



Appendix 6 - Generating a Grounded Theory - Coding linked to Concepts Cross Comparison between Middle Leaders.

<i>Concept</i>	<i>Curriculum Leader A</i>	<i>Curriculum Leader B</i>	<i>Curriculum Leader C</i>
	<i>(Number is reference to comment box on interview transcription)</i>	<i>(Number is reference to comment box on interview transcription)</i>	<i>(Number is reference to comment box on interview transcription)</i>
Hierarchy	<p>Indicates that things are sent down the hierarchy from the SLT – 23/74/172</p> <p>Power relations 26 hierarchy and control remains with SLT - 272</p> <p>Them and us – 57/170/176/188/204/223/240/274 feels segregated from SLT – 203</p> <p>Discontent with being segregated from SLT – 205</p> <p>Resisting things sent down from SLT – 113</p> <p>Without SLT support cannot do things – 139 power and control remains</p>	<p>Views it as a journey as opposed to hierarchy – 1</p> <p>Recognises self as managing and not as leading – 30/31</p> <p>Direction from SLT where asked for things to be done but doesn't understand why it has to be done – 34</p> <p>Upset about lack of consultation – 47</p> <p>Hierarchy – 47</p> <p>Direction from SLT telling middle leaders what to do – 90 – feels dictated to 231</p>	<p>Knows the difference between middle leader and manager - 10/11.</p> <p>Emphasised being responsible for own actions – 10/11.</p> <p>Very hierarchical culture 66/67/109</p> <p>Things get passed down and there is little consultation with middle leader. Things discussed at SLT. Power remains with SLT – 66/103/109</p> <p>Justifying why this happens 70</p>

	<p>with SLT – 140/265</p> <p>Resents fact gets told and not asked – 145/146/147 resentment in lack of consultation - 266</p> <p>Control remains with SLT – 173/170/244</p> <p>Would like to present own side to the SLT – 202 dislikes not having a say – 251</p> <p>Feels SLT has a lack of belief in their middle managers - 253</p>	<p>Seems torn between SLT and team. – 114</p> <p>Fights SLT and does not always support them – 127/224 hostile towards SLT – 127</p> <p>Perceives hidden agendas – 159/160</p> <p>‘top heavy’ leadership – 164</p> <p>Reinforcing the ‘them’ and ‘us’ culture – 188</p> <p>Strongly perceives SLT as managing and not leading - 211</p>	<p>Thinks get told what to do at CL meetings and not consulted – 73/104</p> <p>SLT are managing and not leading but this is unintentional – 72</p> <p>SLT lead and middle managers manage in this school culture - 110</p>
Middle Leader Role	<p>Keen to state that knows what job is despite having no job description – 8/41/48</p> <p>A manager maintains things and a leader leads – 12</p>	<p>Unsure of role no job description – 12/17 can tell me verbally what job is – 18/60</p> <p>Thinks some heads of dept</p>	<p>Motivated to go into SLT later on in life. Pushing to get on with career – 8.</p> <p>Describes how wants to be perceived by team and not by SLT (NR17) However, emphasis is on own self and</p>

<p>Very much management tasks as opposed to leadership – 17</p> <p>Signals is also a teacher – 22</p> <p>Time is a barrier – 28 also a barrier to middle leader collegiality - 212</p> <p>Workload is an issue – 29 claims this is a barrier to collegiality – 291 content with role as it is - 293</p> <p>Focuses on what SLT think are a priority – 69 not always in agreement with middle leaders - 255</p> <p>Barriers to being effective – 89/90</p> <p>Role has changed – 93</p> <p>Main part of role is</p>	<p>do different roles – 19</p> <p>Describing how like to be perceived by others – 21</p> <p>Job is different every day – 27</p> <p>Time is a barrier – 38/48/58/59</p> <p>Has a plan of action for the dept – 39</p> <p>Barriers is administrative tasks – 42</p> <p>Lack of training and is thrown in at deep end and learning on the job - 66</p> <p>Little training – 78/79/84</p> <p>Thinks experience makes you better - 82</p> <p>Budget restricts training –</p>	<p>needs and not with team – 30.</p> <p>Training – learning as goes along but has a middle leader support network and SLT support – 36.</p> <p>No Job description – 38.</p> <p>Goes over and beyond what job description says in own perception. (But how know if doesn't have a job description?) Thinks going over it is expected and job description is basics of the job – 40.</p> <p>Unsure of role and getting involved in everything. Appears to be unfocused. – 42 and 45.</p> <p>Not aware of subject leader standards. 55</p> <p>No training or initiation into role – 111 wants more training 117 but is unsure</p>
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<p>teaching – 99/100</p> <p>Subject leader standards referred to before Ofsted – 103/104</p> <p>Kept out of loop – 235/268 secret agendas – 268/270/271</p> <p>SLT have a culture of managing and not leading – 236</p> <p>Role is one of management and not of leadership – 245/248/262 fulfilling SLT expectations as opposed to leading – 256 lack of explanation – 258</p> <p>Training does happen but is poorly matched to starting point of the middle leaders – 275/276/280/279 need training for collegiality - 277</p>	<p>96 frustration – 100</p> <p>Tries to minimise SLT input into dept – 147 through resistance</p>	<p>on what specifically 118 wants more formal training as opposed to self led - 124</p> <p>Split between SLT and team. 58</p> <p>Doesn't think middle leaders are used effectively – 112</p> <p>Wants more input into developing the people side of leadership 121</p> <p>Workload is a barrier – 122</p> <p>Time is an issue - 126</p> <p>Thinks the role is much prescribed currently and wants it to be more about leadership than managing. How know this if has no job description? Does what is required of a middle leader.</p>
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Collegiality and Capacity Building	<p>Collegiality with the team is strong – 13/14/15</p> <p>Indicates that things are sent down the hierarchy from the SLT – 23/172</p> <p>Does not feel can delegate – 35</p> <p>Identifies job is similar to middle leaders in school – 44/46/49</p> <p>Identifies that all need to work together – 77</p> <p>Formal meeting at curriculum leaders. Indicating may not meet if not forced to. – 119</p> <p>Middle leaders don't work together – 121/220 trying to but not happening – 123</p> <p>Thinks it would be good to</p>	<p>Will help out with whole school things as used to be former AST but only if wants to...not because asked to – 14</p> <p>Frustrated with SLT and wants more freedom – 53/101</p> <p>Happy to meet with other middle lades – 99</p> <p>No collegiality 102 lack of trust in others – 103</p> <p>Forced to do things without consultation - 121</p> <p>Contrived collegiality – meeting for the sake of meeting – 128 – would rather have a genuine discussion than contrived collegiality at CL meetings – 183 – wants it to be genuine - 274</p> <p>Would like to see others and share practice –</p>	<p>Confides often thinks for staff and doesn't allow them to think for themselves – 13.</p> <p>SLT are supportive of middle leaders – 31</p> <p>Being led by SLT at the moment but wants to become more independent – 46 and 48/108</p> <p>Doesn't meet with other middle leaders but wants to 59 and 63</p> <p>Shared leadership in strategy groups can have a say if choose to - 77</p> <p>Perceives to have not led change at a whole school level – 79 but would like to have an input - 85</p> <p>Not familiar with shared leadership concept – 80</p>
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<p>meet to get support of other middle leaders – 127/217</p> <p>Doesn't see collegiality s the way forward – 131 collegiality started and then stopped - 214</p> <p>3 different forms of isolation – SLT, middle leaders and teachers. 144</p> <p>Provides a definition of what 'consultation' means in this school. 149/172 doesn't agree with this – 227 lack of consultation – 240 hurt by lack of consultation 243</p> <p>Shared decision-making is nonexistent even at middle leader level - 159 so meaning making is made by guesswork – 160 would like more consultation 296</p> <p>Not involved in whole school decision-making – 163/162 but would like to be – 208/209 but also</p>	<p>136/210/202</p> <p>Perceives SLT as not wanting middle leader input – 152</p> <p>Not a culture of shared leadership distributed leadership is not term that is used – 161</p> <p>Prefers to do things through motivation and not through force – 173</p> <p>Has no idea if others are singing from the same song sheet - 233</p>	<p>Contrived collegiality – 100</p> <p>Wants more input from SLT so can explain new initiatives better to team. 81/82/83</p> <p>Wants more consultation from the SLT as opposed to being out the loop and give a different perspective – 93</p> <p>Wouldn't do as asked by SLT if didn't agree with it – 105</p> <p>Trust is important – 129 likes the support of the middle manager 130</p> <p>Describes how wants to be perceived by team and not by SLT (NR17) However, emphasis is on own self and needs and not with team – 30.</p> <p>Believes schools in the 21st</p>
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highlights negatives of this
- 210

Own definition of
distributed leadership – 185
– give incorrect definition
of distributed leadership -
191

Not opposed to getting
involved in whole school
decision-making – 194

Talks about how
collegiality may look – 197
vision and looking ahead –
198/207 them and us
culture is a barrier to this
though – 201

Doesn't feel listened – 203
upset at not being
appreciated – 229 resistance
to SLT - 234

Other middle leaders also
feel this sense of isolation –
218

Feels meetings are a waste

century need to get the
input and greater
involvement of middle
leaders to be able to
improve and get better.

	of time - 222		
	Feels out of the loop - 264		
balkanized	Claims to have specialist knowledge – power relations - 51	Attaches more importance to departmental tasks as opposed to whole school agenda – 51/52	Wants to be seen as an insider and belonging to team. Identity is important – 53.
	Thinking in dept terms – 65	Doesn't see whole school things as important as departmental – 52 and wants to focus on own agenda - 55	Doesn't meet with other middle leaders but wants to 59
	Explaining allegiance to team - 107		Only impact is on dept. 74
	Isolated from other middle leaders – 115	Everyone does things on their own – 63	Sees not being balkanized as a plus – 87
	Indicating that people tend to remain in own departmental areas – 117 working as subunits - 246	Bunker thinking – 76 Not a shared way – 93	Can only describe things from a departmental perspective. A balkanized culture. 96
	Working in isolation as doesn't know of doing the same as other middle leaders – 128	Very confident talking about own dept – 94 School culture is one of isolation – 107	Thinks whole school leadership should be a part of the middle leaders role but still thinks in terms of her team and not whole

<p>Working mainly at departmental level – 163 out of comfort zone in whole school decision-making zone – 166/179</p> <p>Evidence of balkanized no idea how other depts work – 178/179</p> <p>Lots of wondering what other people are doing in this school. 219</p> <p>Only work together when forced to at CL meetings – 220</p> <p>Emphasis on balkanized – 237 can only talk confidently about own depts and not others – 237</p> <p>Doesn't like current set up – 238</p>	<p>Puts depts work as a priority as can see why doing it and can see the end result – 110</p> <p>Clear vision on where wants dept to go – 124</p> <p>Familiarity with what knows best as opposed to venturing out – 125</p> <p>Rarely gets out to see other middle leaders – 132 and would like to see the but SLT do not encourage this – 134</p> <p>Feels different cultures are present in different depts – 140</p> <p>Not all depts are heading in the same direction – 142</p> <p>balkanized has established itself as part of the schools culture – 143</p>	<p>school – 132/134</p>
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		<p>Dept vision and whole school visions are two separate entities – 228</p> <p>Has own vision – 230</p>	
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Appendix 7 – Data Analysis

Key Themes from data	Main concepts to be included in this theme.
Relationships with others. 3.3; 3.4;	Relationships between SLT and MLs. Relationships between MLs and other MLs.
Lack of consistency as to the exact role of the middle leaders 3.1; 3.2; 3.6; 3.5	Job description. Training. Barriers to the role.
Perceptions of others are important to the MLs and SLT. 3.1; 3.3; 3.4; (Cross themes link here)	Roles Relationships with NL's and SL's.
Belonging together as a group. 3.3; 3.7; 3.9; (cross themes link here)	Relationships with other ML's. Capacity/collegiality and collaboration. Experiences about decision-making.
Support 3.3; 3.4; 3.9; p	Cross themes – 3.3; 3.4; Relationships Role of middle leaders. Decision-making.
The culture of balkanized 3.14; 3.15; 3.16;	Encouraged by SLT or ML's Encouraged by the hierarchy. Links to transactional leadership culture.

Desire for collegiality	
3.7; (Cross themes)	
SLT not relinquishing control to middle leaders.	Hierarchy is operational and important.
3.8; 3.9; 3.10; 3.11; 3.2;	Decision-making demonstrates this culture.

Key

- 3.1 Participant thoughts about the Middle Leader Role.
- 3.2 Participant thoughts about the Barriers to Middle Leader Role.
- 3.3 Participant thoughts about their Relationships with Other Middle Leaders.
- 3.4 Participant thoughts about their Relationships with Senior Leaders.
- 3.5 Participant thoughts about Middle Leader Training.
- 3.6 Participant thoughts about Middle Leader Job Description.
- 3.7 Participant thoughts about Collegiality. Capacity Building, and Collaboration.
- 3.8 Participant thoughts about trust and power (also written about in hierarchy section).
- 3.9 Participant’s experiences and thoughts about decision-making procedures in school A.
- 3.10 Participant thoughts about hierarchy.
- 3.11 Participant thoughts about transactional leadership.
- 3.12 Participant thoughts about transformational leadership.
- 3.13 Participant thoughts about balkanized.
- 3.14 Participant thoughts about whether balkanized is encouraged by the senior leadership team.
- 3.15 Participant thoughts about whether balkanized is encouraged by the middle leadership team.